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New Statesman

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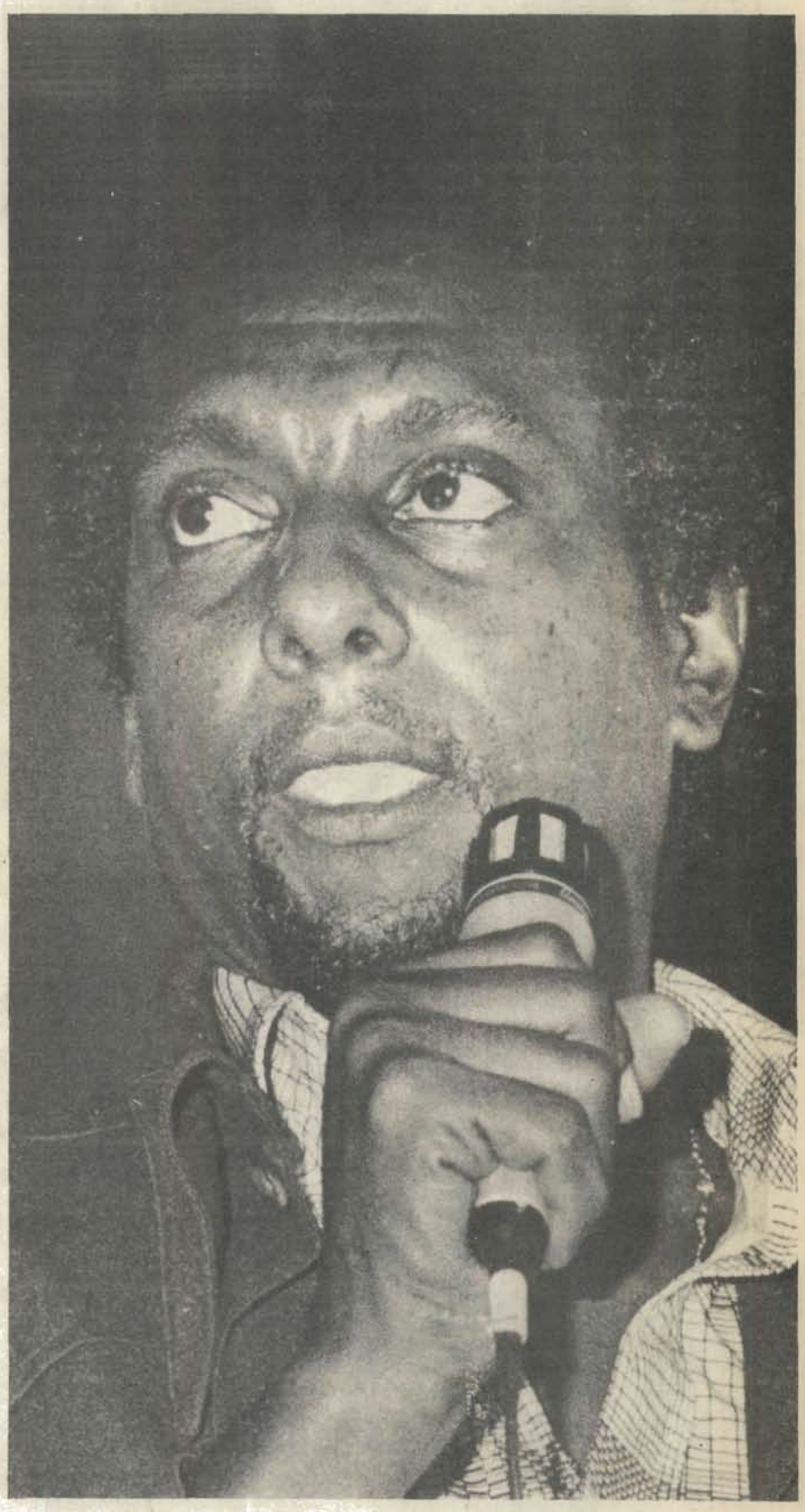
KWAME TOURÉ



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Defending the Ayatollah

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New Statesman

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Cover photo: David Hoffman

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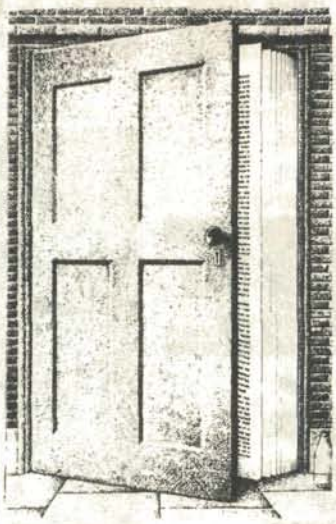

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New Statesman Vol 107 No 2758 27 January 1984

Afraid of ideas

NOTHING STRIKES as much horror into the heart of Conservative England as the sight of an angry black man – unless it is a crowd of angry black people. By banning Kwame Touré, born Stokely Carmichael, from entering Britain for a speaking tour, the Home Office is reacting either out of fear or spite in a vindictive display of its power over black politics. Its top-level decision – which is that Mr Touré's visit would not be 'conducive to the public good' – is also of course racist. Mr Touré's message is an age-old one: the poor and oppressed must confidently organise if they want to change society. It is, and *New Statesman* readers can see this for themselves, in no way an incitement to violence against or hatred of white people. But by deciding that Mr Touré's predominantly black audience must not be allowed to hear this message, put by a sophisticated and experienced speaker, the Home Office is treating black people as children – as though any rude words will cause them to get over-excited and rush out to riot. The racism of its decision is diluted only by the knowledge that the Home Office is treating black people now as it regarded the white working class 'mob' of the nineteenth century.

As our extracts from Mr Touré's speech make quite clear, his analysis of those 1981 crowd actions in Britain is that conventionally made by socialist commentators: people will spontaneously rebel when some incident proves to be the last straw, but spontaneous rebellion does not change the world, only political organisation based on the serious study of socialism does. British public meeting rooms are filled with white socialists saying precisely this. What is new and different for a British audience is Mr Touré's stress on Pan Africanism – that for black Britons Africa must be the source of their political inspiration and the true long-term goal of their political activities. This will conflict with those organisations trying to create as their priority some unity of all black Britons whether their ethnic origins are in Asia or Africa. However, this debate over the long-term political identity of ethnic minorities could only have been fruitful and part of the democratic process. The Home Office is trying to crush it.

The procedure used to keep out Mr Touré was itself profoundly undemocratic. He was held by immigration officials at Heathrow at about 7am last Sunday. He was held there incommunicado until he was put on a plane out of Britain some four hours later. Enquiries on his behalf by his solicitor Paul Boateng suggest that the immigration officers were acting directly on orders from the Home Secretary. So far the Home Office has refused to say why it chose to exclude Mr Touré. Exceptionally in immigration cases, it refused to accept representations by an MP (Alf Dubs), a right which is habitually accepted because there is no right of appeal against such decisions.

There is no doubt that any interference in the right of free speech and free movement can only be justified if there is the most grave threat to the public good. In such cases, the public should certainly be entitled to know how it is under threat. By acting in this way, the Home Office is both engaging in government by bureaucratic dictat and revealing depths of paranoia about black politicians that can only do more damage to race relations in this country. □

Nigel owns up

NOT EVEN her closest friend would claim that the Prime Minister has a bubbling sense of humour. So the little script she wrote and performed when presenting an award last week to the comedy series *Yes, Minister* was all the more surprising. On the 'many-a-true-word' principle, why did Mrs Thatcher jestingly say that she wants to abolish all economists?

Can it be that the penny has finally dropped and that she now realises that the economic mumbo jumbo that she learned rather late in life at the knee of her then mentor Sir Keith Joseph has failed her? She was told that cutting back the amount of money in circulation would have no permanent effect on the level of economic activity, but after a lag of about 18 months would simply bring down prices. She was told that lower prices would somehow lead spontaneously to sustainable long-term growth and high employment levels. She bought a loony idea from an American economist, Professor Arthur Laffer, that lower *rates* of income tax would so improve the performance of the higher paid in commerce and industry that output would expand and thus actually *increase* the total tax take.

This may all sound like a crude parody of her economic policies. But the terrible truth is that it is an accurate representation of the essentials of Thatchernomics. The Empress goes on asserting that there is no alternative, but the fact is that she has no clothes. What she and her two Chancellors to date have been doing may make political sense for the Tory Party – the total tax burden on the economy has been increased by no less than 5 per cent since 1979 in order to make room for very substantial tax cuts for those at the top end of the income scale. It makes no other sense.

Mr Lawson himself was driven last week into admitting that his economic policy has no theoretical foundation. He was pressed during an interview on Channel 4's *A Week in Politics* to admit that he had no idea what, in his view, should be the target level for the government's budget deficit ('I don't think it's necessary now to decide precisely on what that ideal budget deficit would be').

Such pragmatism is very human, but it knocks the guts out of the whole theology of his precious 'medium term financial strategy'. For this government, the key to the whole arch of economic policy is the budget deficit. Yet here was the Chancellor saying that he has no notion of what his ideal should be.

From an economic point of view, the Chancellor's position is absurd. But then he is not really playing economics. He is playing politics. He wants to cut taxes for actual and potential Tory voters by as much as possible before the next election. So the lower he can get the deficit now, the more he can give away later. Simple, really. □

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Home Office admits: Yes, it's our hole again

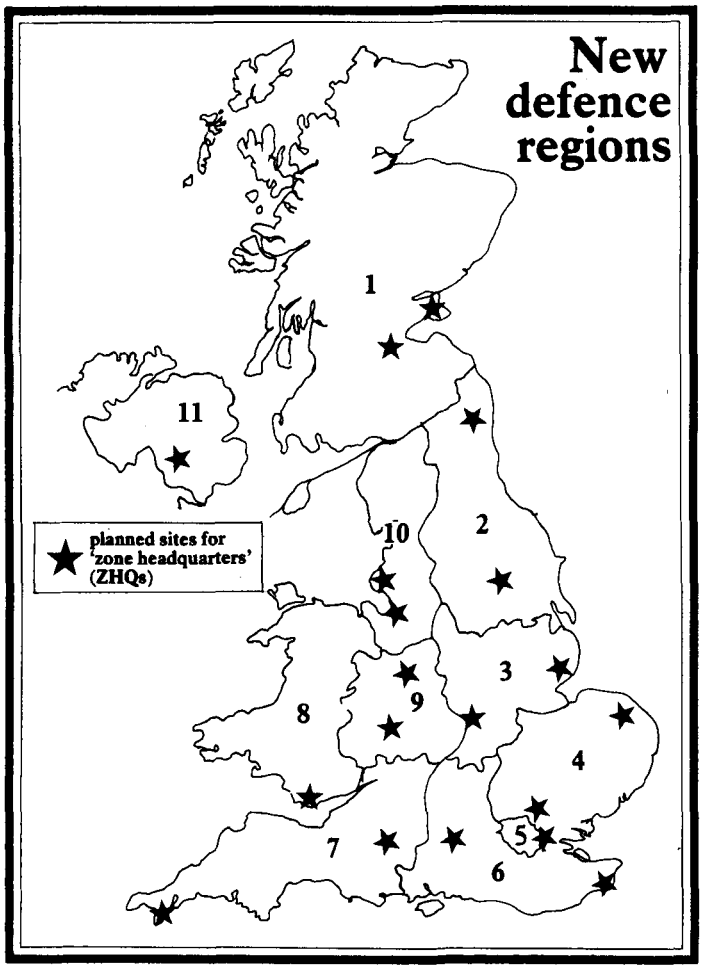
AS PART of a new system of civil defence bunkers, the Home Office is to construct three new bunkers for civil servants and other officials. The new system, which the Home Office plans to announce publicly in the next few months, will be the eighth reorganisation of the government's national bunker network since 1950.

Officials claim the new plan, which will create 21 protected sites – to be known as Zone Headquarters – throughout the UK, will streamline the bunker network and actually reduce the number of officials with places in 'protected headquarters'. But, despite the multiplicity of plans, none of the bunker networks of the last 25 years has actually been completed before the system was changed. And previous schemes have produced a litter of disused bunkers across the countryside.

Although the exact locations of the new bunkers are still classified, one of them was discovered last month as an unintended result of an attempt to ridicule CND supporters by a Conservative MP. It is at Chilmark, west of Salisbury, and will cost over £1.5 million to complete. Chilmark is already the site of a 13-acre underground RAF ammunition store. The new bunker is being built on the surface, adjacent to the main London-Exeter railway line. The Home Office's contractors, Ernest Ireland Construction, identify the secret site only as the 'Salisbury Crown Building'.

Planning permission for a so-called 'Government communications centre' at Chilmark was first applied for in 1976 – but nobody had noticed until now. At the end of last November, however, Conservative MP for Salisbury Mr Robert Key asked Defence Secretary Michael Heseltine to confirm that the 'large hole being dug outside RAF Chilmark is, in fact, a septic tank'. Key intended to ridicule suspicions being spread by CND supporters – but the Defence Secretary confessed only to a 'yawning gap in my own intelligence gathering system. I have no knowledge of these events'.

Soon afterwards, the Home Office admitted that 'we can confirm that it is our hole'. It would be an emergency 'administrative centre'. Government sources confirmed to the *New Statesman* last week that an existing bunker covering this part of southern England, at Ullenwood near Cheltenham, would be closed as and when the replacement site became available.



Under the new scheme, Britain will be divided into 11 Home Defence Regions, each of which, except London, will have two alternative 'Zone Headquarters' (see map). The two Zone Headquarters (ZHQs) will share responsibility for governing each region. Scotland and Northern Ireland, previously autonomous regions, have now been integrated into the English emergency government control system.

During a pre-war crisis, 11 junior government ministers would be appointed as Regional Commissioners by Royal Warrant, and given total power in their regions. Each Commissioner would choose one of the region's two Zone HQs as a base. A civil service deputy would run the other ZHQ. If one Zone Headquarters is knocked out, the surviving HQ can then rule the whole region. Chilmark will probably be ZHQ7/1 in this system.

Besides the Zone headquarters, the new plan provides for 'reserve teams' of specially appointed government officials to be evacuated from London and other cities to safe areas which the government has already preselected in the countryside. About 5,000-10,000 officials would be evacuated.

The 1984 network of ZHQs replaces a system of Sub-Regional Headquarters (SRHQs) which has been in operation for more than a decade. There have previously been systems of 'Regional War Rooms', 'Sub Regional Controls' and 'Regional Seats of Government'.

Two other new ZHQs will be located in the north of Wales (probably called ZHQ8/2) and in the Lancashire or Cumbria area (ZHQ10/1). Sites for these bunkers have yet to be found. The new bunker in the northwest will replace an existing SRHQ below DHSS offices in Southport, which repeatedly gets flooded.

Each of the former SRHQs was intended to hold 180-200 officials. But the new Home Office plans are claimed to 'reduce considerably' the numbers who would go into each of the 21 ZHQs. Under plans formulated in 1972, however, about 300 additional senior civil servants, each ranked Principal or above, would also be evacuated to safe areas in each region. Other key officials would be sent to the Cabinet Office's bunker, the Central Government War HQ, at Hawthorn near Bath. Part of the Hawthorn complex is also now being refurbished.

Duncan Campbell

Falklands censorship continues

Lieut. David Tinker: 'pointless war'

THE FALKLANDS WAR may have ended over 18 months ago, but the censorship goes on. The Royal Navy has banned officers and men from taking part in a BBC programme about the Falklands War, to be broadcast next week, and tried to prevent Navy wives and naval dockyard workers from appearing on the programme.

In a 'signal' (circular) Vice-Admiral David Brown, Flag Officer Plymouth, said that the restriction on forces personnel commenting in public on government policy meant they were not allowed to accept the BBC's invitation to take part in the filming of a play about the Falklands and an audience discussion afterwards.

But pressure was also put on Navy wives, and on civilian Ministry of Defence employees in Plymouth docks, who had also been invited to take part. Several dockers agreed to take part in the programme, with their wives, but then pulled out.

Some wives refused to take part in the programme, implying that to do so would damage their husbands' career prospects, although in the discussion on the programme a Navy wife disagreed and said she was not restricted.

Yet a recently retired Marine said: 'Certainly in branches of the service which are involved more deeply in more secretive types of work, your wife's opinions mean an awful lot and can certainly mar your career prospects.'

In fact *Falkland Sound to Plymouth Sound* (BBC2, 2 February) has been obstructed by the authori-

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ties all along the way. Based on the successful stage adaptation of the letters of David Tinker, the young naval officer who died in what he described as 'the most pointless war in British history', the idea was to take the play to a community closely involved in the Falklands War, and to record the voices of individuals whose lives were most affected by the conflict.

As well as the naval community, Plymouth is the home of many of the Falklanders who have settled in Britain.

Tory councillor Ralph Morrell, chairman of the management committee of the town's prestigious Theatre Royal, refused to allow the play to be staged there. The Falklands war was too recent, he said, and the play would cause 'distress and hurt to so many in Plymouth who had loved ones involved in the campaign'.

Then a plan to take the play to Britannia Royal Naval College at Dartmouth was referred to the MoD in Whitehall, who blocked it. When a second nationwide tour was planned in the winter, a small theatre club in Plymouth, the Serenade Theatre, offered to take it, and the production eventually went ahead.

The televised discussion took place without any contributions from serving naval personnel, although three ex-Navy officers turned up and spoke. And, although trade union officials denied knowledge of any managerial constraint on dockyard workers, only one took part in the discussion.

John Rentoul

Journalists go to Lords over right to strike

NEXT WEDNESDAY the House of Lords will be asked by the National Union of Journalists to allow the union to continue to back those of its members who are in dispute with Dimbleby newspapers – a small but previously profitable group of local papers owned by the broadcaster David Dimbleby.

In the meantime, Labour politicians and trade union figures are being asked to refuse to be interviewed by Dimbleby. As a secondary form of action, this may well prove the most effective method of putting pressure on him and the law courts are powerless to stop it.

There has been trouble at Dimbleby newspapers, which produces the *Richmond and Twickenham Times* and three other local papers in south-west London, since late summer last year.

With the group's printing operations becoming unprofitable, the management had entered into negotiations with the NGA over redundancies. But there were long delays in the talks and last summer the management declared two men, one of them the Father of the Chapel, redundant. The NGA claimed these sackings breached procedures, and the printers stopped work.

Anxious to avoid losing circulation to competing free newspapers, Dimbleby, apparently reluctantly, decided to sack his printers and to look elsewhere for printing. In order to avoid the risk of the papers being boycotted at another printer, the group took the work to the non-union TBF Printers, part of the T. Bailey Forman group which also owns the *Nottingham Evening Post*.

The NUJ has been in dispute with T. Bailey Forman since they sacked 28 journalists five years ago during the provincial newspaper strike. Five of those journalists are still receiving dispute benefit from the union.

Much to Dimbleby's apparent surprise, his 13 journalists walked out when they heard of his decision.

Joanna Davies, the 24-year-old Mother of the Chapel, says: 'We were told by Malcolm Richards, the editor, that if we did not cooperate we would be sacked. We were asked to choose between our loyalty to the company and our loyalty to the union. But loyalty has to be earned.'

Hoping to prevent the NUJ calling out its members at Dimbleby

MISCELLANY

Of swamps and slime

Bernard Dineen, who is both the Literary and the Business Editor of the *Yorkshire Post*, has complained about the number of people getting in on the George Orwell act. 'But the most impudent contribution has come from the *New Statesman*,' he says. He was impressed by the double-page cartoon which formed the cover of the Christmas issue, depicting Orwell entering, 'through a door marked 1984' (in fact it was marked 101), a room full of politicians, including Mrs Thatcher wearing a badge saying 'Freedom is Slavery'. 'What insolence,' thunders Dineen. 'The *New Statesman* represents everything Orwell detested.' Closer to the present, Dineen gets into his stride. 'The magazine emerged from its fellow-travelling swamp for a few years, only to plunge into a swamp of a different kind: subversive, paranoically anti-NATO and anti-American, slimy in its tactics and dishonest in its methods.

'Personal smears against opponents are used unscrupulously. The latest target is the editor of the *Sunday Times*, who is being spied on and besmirched at every opportunity.'

Talking of personal smears, Dineen is famous for two articles he wrote in September 1982, attacking Jonathan Dimbleby, the Yorkshire TV journalist (not to be confused with his brother David, currently at war with the NUJ). He accused Dimbleby of distorting the truth and using the YTV series 'The Cold War Game' to promote his own political views. Dimbleby was disinclined to take action, but YTV sued, as Dineen had also accused its executives of failing in their duty to society by allowing this 'busy little left-wing propagandist' to make the series. Ironically, the *Yorkshire Post* has a stake in YTV.

After six months of blustering, wriggling and hedging, Dineen printed an apology, withdrawing these accusations. It went on: 'In particular I said that the programme on the two Germanys was "an elaborately constructed lie", and I suggested that it was deliberately designed to show East Germany in a more favourable light than West Germany. My allegations were unfair and I wish to withdraw them. I offer Mr Dimbleby and YTV my apologies.'

As part of the out-of-court settlement, the *Yorkshire Post* paid a substantial sum of money to a charity of Dimbleby's choice. We shall spend the next six months thinking about which charity we would like Dineen to enrich.

The Omegawd Report

New transport minister Nicholas Ridley has told officials in his department how impressed he is by the 'Omega' report on transport policy, produced by the right-wing Adam Smith Institute. He is reported to have described it as 'excellent'. The report urges privatising the National Bus Company, introducing private minibuses in urban areas and building more roads (*NS* 7 October 1983). The report was largely written by two people from Consolidated Gold Fields (whose subsidiary Amey Roadstone mines stone for roads), a former bus operator and Anthony Shephard. Shephard made a bid to run four minibus routes in competition with London Transport last year. A public enquiry organised by London Transport rejected the bid, but Shephard appealed to the then transport minister Tom King. A report on the proposal is expected to land on Ridley's desk next week. He will no doubt subject it to the same unprejudiced scrutiny the Omega report received.

Policy on pin-ups

Snow storms in Scotland pushed the pin-up usually on page three of the *Daily Record* back to page five on Tuesday. 'Scotland caught in white hell' stories filled pages one to four of the *Daily Mirror*'s northern stablemate, 'Scotland's Biggest Daily Sale'. On *very* special occasions page three will disappear altogether. This happened on the Silver Jubilee, the Royal Wedding, when John Lennon was shot – and when the paper broke the news about the Glasgow Rape Case.

Defensive ministry

News of the incident in which a worker at Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Research Establishment clutched a radioactive plutonium package to his chest without checking that its sealing envelope was intact has increased scepticism about the competence of the Ministry of Defence. When buildings in Britain's prime nuclear defence centre were closed in 1978 because so many workers were internally contaminated with plutonium, an independent inquiry criticised it for having too few safety staff, unnecessary secrecy and antiquated buildings. The buildings are now being replaced at a cost of £500 million, but the unnecessary secrecy remains. The story of the recent incident was only reluctantly admitted after it appeared in a local paper. Even the decision to rebuild the weapons material factory was taken without the knowledge of Parliament. Doubts about the entire nuclear industry must return like a bad dream to those who remember that in 1982 Berkshire County Council decided not to request a cancer study downwind of Aldermaston following advice from the National Radiological Protection Board that little emission of radioactivity to the atmosphere had been detected. But the inquiry after the 1978 close-down had found some ventilation stack sampling devices had been installed the wrong way round, sampling fresh air instead of the discharges. NRPB supported their advice by noting that there was no evidence that emissions from Windscale had caused any leukaemia in Cumbria.

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newspapers, the company sought an injunction against the union in the courts under James Prior's 1980 Employment Act.

So far both the High Court and the Court of Appeal have agreed that the union's action is outside the law since the union, by calling out its members, has forced Dimbleby to breach his contract with TBF Printers. This is unlawful under the Act because the NUJ has no dispute with TBF Printers, only with T. Bailey Forman.

The issue rests on whether T. Bailey Forman and TBF Printers are in fact the same company. Both are subsidiaries of Forman Hardy Holdings, they share the same address, the same phone number, and the same managing director, the virulently anti-union Christopher Pole-Carew, who publicly gloats at his victory over the unions.

If the House of Lords agrees with the lower courts employers will be provided with a legal loophole to side-step the impact of any industrial action. Companies will be able to set up, in name only, separate companies to provide their main supplies. Any strikers attempting to stop supplies or services to these 'separate' companies will be acting illegally. That may force the TUC to reassess its position of abiding by the law.

The NUJ will not lightly abandon the dispute, and has been using the time between court cases to move its fairly insubstantial assets around.

Whatever the outcome, Dimbleby appears to gain very little and may have lost a great deal, in terms of his own career.

Labour Research estimates that his five sets of companies provide a joint income with his wife (Josceline writes cookery books) of about £89,000.

He says himself: 'It was the last thing in the world I wanted.' His newspapers were off the streets, and they are in competition with two free sheets. 'I was desperately keen to save the papers,' he says.

The group is one of the few remaining family newspaper groups, and he maintains his battle with the NGA left him little choice but to go to TBF Printers, which could provide the service he needed and 'was not susceptible to blacking by the NGA and Sogat'.

But the legal interpretation of the dispute may be difficult. Sir John Donaldson, Master of the Rolls, told the NUJ in the Court of Appeal: 'It is a complicated matter upon which to write judgements because of the quite extraordinary provisions in terms of the drafting of section 17 of the 1980 Act which really requires you to put three cold towels around your head before you can trace them through.'

The response to the judgment may be less difficult for it could unite unions in a challenge to the law.

Geraldine Hackett

Lead astray in Cowley gardens

OXFORD City Council may take legal action against British Leyland following evidence their Cowley plant is causing lead fall-out in the area. Analysis of paint fall-out shows that it contained five times the recommended level of lead, though at a meeting last August BL denied there was any lead in the paint at all.

According to an independent report being studied by Oxford's Environmental Health Committee, garden vegetables taken from the area round the Cowley works contained up to 4.91 milligrammes of lead per kilogram – nearly five times the standard of 1 milligramme per kilogram set by the Lead in Food Regulations 1979. Another sample showed a lead level of 3.9 milligrammes per kilogram. The average in all the samples was 2.32 milligrammes per kilogram.

Although BL officials have consistently denied responsibility for the pollution, the report says that one sample of BL paint, 'Clove Brown', registered 28,000 milligrammes of lead per kilogram of paint. The national recommended limit is under 5,000 milligrammes per kilogram. Another paint sample, 'Monza Red', was on the 5,000 milligrammes limit.

However, according to John Parker, the chairman of the council's environmental health committee, BL officials told councillors and residents at an informal meeting last August that their paint did not contain lead. When BL was told of the report earlier this month, the company accepted that some of its paint did contain lead, but argued that the levels were acceptable and could not have caused the pollution in the vegetables.

Last week, top BL management met councillors and residents again, but said they could not 'fully' answer their questions in the presence of the local press. However, after the press left, management was not more forthcoming, says Mr Parker.

After this unproductive meeting, the city's solicitor, David Taylor, was asked to prepare a report on legal options. One of these is likely to be the serving of an abatement notice under the 1936 Public Health Act. The report will go to the environmental health committee on 9 February.

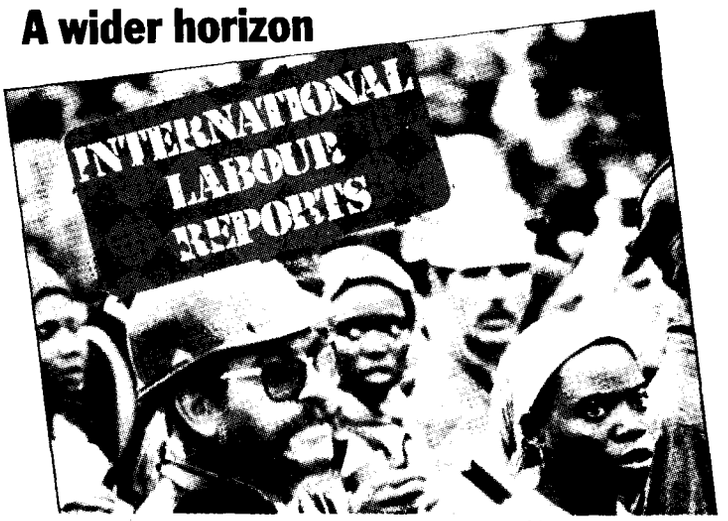
The source of the fall-out is believed to be the paint overspray filtration equipment attached to the repair booth in E-block. The block is 26 years old and within 60 feet of a residential area. According to one councillor, the filtration system in E-block was out of order for a week at the beginning of December but paint spraying was allowed to continue.

Mr Peter Baillie, BL's Manager of Corporate Affairs, admitted that there was lead content in the paint emitted from 'E' block, but said that soil analysis had not confirmed a causal relation between the emission and the lead in the vegetables growing nearby.

Although Mr Baillie also denied allegations that BL had wanted to exclude the Press, that it was being secretive and that it had lied to the Council and local residents, BL have said that they will phase out the troublesome paints by the end of the year. But, councillors point out, the problem of paint fall-out will remain until a way is found of improving the efficiency of the filtration system. Oxford East MP Steven Morris has advised residents to sue BL for compensation for damage to cars and clothes caused by the paint fall-out.

David Leppard

A wider horizon



A new magazine dealing with labour issues all over the world has just made its first appearance. Called International Labour Reports it is produced in Manchester, and will appear every two months. Its aim is to provide trade unionists here with reliable information on labour conditions abroad. 'When trade unionists find out about methods of organisation by third world workers, they stop seeing them as a mass of yellow faces, and began to see them as fellow trade unionists' says Stuart Holland, one of the magazine workers. With grants from various third world charities, the magazine is run by a workers' co-operative, who plough back some of their wages into the paper. Their initial print run is of 2,000. International Labour Reports is produced from 300 Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9NS.

Lorry weights raised through 'back door'

THE GOVERNMENT has been accused of allowing the maximum weight of heavy lorries to be increased by nearly four tonnes through the 'back door'.

The maximum weight of juggernauts was raised only last year from 32.5 to 38 tonnes after a long-running political battle in which the government had to back down, first from a 44 tonne limit and then from a 40 tonne limit.

But now Jack Graham, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities transport chairman, claims that at least four of the ten traffic areas that cover England and Wales – Eastern, East Midlands, North West and Western – are unofficially raising that limit again by refusing to prosecute owners or drivers unless the lorries are more than 10 per cent overweight. Mr Graham has asked for a meeting with junior Transport Minister Lynda Chalker.

This revelation comes despite assurances from the government in a White Paper two years ago that they would be 'increasing the number of lorries weighed by enforcement staff'.

In the four areas the maximum weight on any one axle can be increased from 10.5 tonnes to 11.6 tonnes with impunity. This increase is deceptively damaging. The road damage caused by heavy lorries is related to the fourth power of the axle weight. So a 10 per cent increase in axle weights increases road damage by almost 50 per cent.

The new ruling will please at least one bastion of the Conservative Party. In 1981 the MP for St Ives and then Secretary of State for Defence, John Nott, wrote to Norman Fowler, the then Transport Secretary, complaining about one enforcement officer working for the Department of Transport and asking for him to be moved (*NS* 1 Jan 1982). Nott's chief complaint was that hauliers were being taken to court and he asked for standards to be raised in an 'informal' manner.

Mick Hamer

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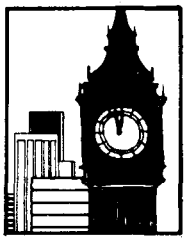

ANDREW ROTH

Open season for Tory rebels – Thatcher's bad week

REBELLION-PLAGUED Conservatives were whistling in the dark this week, as they tiptoed by a yawning grave. With a theoretical majority in the House of Commons of 144 (after Eric Varley's formal departure) and an operational majority of 160, there is no threat before 1988 to Conservative government. But, despite her *coup de guerre* in the Falklands and her *coup de politique* last June, Mrs Thatcher's battling figure is now often seen in Parliament against a background of silent and unenthusiastic Tory faces.

This was most dramatically manifested when Neil Kinnock attacked her on the afternoon of 18 January over a £4.50 cut in housing benefit for a widow with a £75 occupational pension on top of her state pension. Tory MPs were clearly unimpressed by her normal feat of rattling off statistics about how the Conservatives are now paying out £3.7 billion in housing benefit, or 80 per cent more in real terms than under Labour. They knew that this would not be much help in explaining the cuts to such an elderly widow – more likely to be a Tory than a Labour voter. Mr Kinnock had picked his illustrative statistics cunningly.

Ministers are whistling loudly that they are out of the woods on the Rates Bill. They have a safe majority in Committee, they say. Despite Opposition hopes, they insist that the Lords will only tinker, neither delaying it seriously nor amputating the power in Part II to enable an Environment Secretary to impose his rating will on any council in the land. But this semi-public show of optimism contrasts sharply with the leaked seven-page memorandum of Mrs Thatcher's interventionist press secretary, Bernard Ingham.

Mr Ingham, an explosive Yorkshireman, once a *Guardian* reporter and Labour council candidate, was livid when the *Guardian* published his estimate: 'The Government's campaign has to be mounted in the face of hostility by both the political and official local government establishment, opposition by the Government's own supporters in local government, an organized and expensively financed campaign against the Government's policies . . .'. Mrs Thatcher's own clear position is that country Tories are a vested interest that can and should be ignored by any radical Conservative government.

What was important about Monday's rebellion on the rate support grant – the fourth revolt in eight days – was not the reduced numbers, but the character of the interest that the rebels represented. The rebels, both from the old establishment (Pym, Macmillan, Morrison) and from the new professionals (du Cann, Maxwell-Hyslop, Braine), articulated in public the private complaints of the backbone of the old Conservative Party – the loyal, low-spending county councils. The theme was simple and oft-repeated – for Somerset, for Cambridgeshire, for Essex, for Wiltshire, for Cheshire. Tory after Tory spelled out the unfairness and idiocies of the present system. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop, for example, pointed out that the rate support grant assessments have in them an element for coastline responsibilities. But this is calculated on the basis of *population*, not *length* of coastline involved. So Bournemouth gets more than the whole of lightly populated Cornwall!

In fact, Conservative MPs are clearly listening more to the arguments of the Labour front bench as it attacks the government. This is mainly because, with such a huge majority, they can afford the luxury of deciding on the issues. It is partly because the new Chief Whip, John Wakeham, is a liberal-minded man, who is running discipline on a loose rein. But it is also because the new Kinnock team – and particularly sharp persuaders like John Cunningham – is providing them with food for thought. They were certainly stopped by Jack Straw's warning last week that the operation of 'rate capping' could increase the rates more for the ten (often Tory) authorities just below the top twenty of Labour's 'big spending worst offenders'.

SOME OF THE RECENT mini-revolts have helped to establish the differing breaking points of the various groups, fairly loosely coalesced in today's Conservative Party. Thus the Bill to privatise the Royal Ordnance Factories brought the negative votes of an 'old' right-winger, Den Dover of Chorley, and 'new' Ann Winterton of Congleton (next to Macclesfield, the constituency represented by her husband Nicholas, who rebelled again himself on Monday). Although quite as right-wing as her husband, Mrs Winterton's defence of her local ROF – the constituency's biggest employer – was in terms indistinguishable from that put forward by the local unions.

The minority of civilised and liberal new Tory MPs who came into the House last June have run up their little rebel flags – and been subjected to right-wing snorts and baiting for their pains. During Question Time recently, one of them dismissed this baiting as coming from 'The Fascist Tendency'. This was an understandable jibe, rather than political analysis.

For the majority of the right-wing Tory new boys support a wide variety of right-wing causes. Thus Edward Leigh, the new boy for Gainsborough and Horncastle, is a male and intellectual version of Lady Olga Maitland's 'love cruise' campaign. Most of them have come from fighting against Labour in local councils. Some, like Christopher Chope, pioneered the idea of privatising garbage collection in Wandsworth. But this does not make them automatic enthusiasts for rate capping.

In fact, the only enthusiastic Tory backbench supporter of rate capping was David Amess. He won the new town seat of Basildon, where there is not a single Tory councillor. He won mainly because the vote was split by Sue Slipman, the SDP's ex-Communist candidate, who got a quarter of the vote last June. Rate capping would help Amess's big business ratepayers (Marconi Avionics, Distillers, Gordon's Gin).

But this week's debate on the rate support grant has shown how many Tories are suspicious of the 'instruments' being brought out to save them from the 'overspenders'. A retired Permanent Secretary gives it as his opinion that only one civil servant at the Treasury and two at Environment fully understand local government finance – and no politicians. Experienced Tory councillors admit that in the past keeping rates down has been done with all the accuracy of a crude scatter gun.

The battle over the shape and financing of local government will go on for another 18 months. The Rates Bill, now in Committee, will go to the Lords after Easter. It will be followed in the Commons by the Bill to abolish the 1985 metropolitan council elections – to avoid the certainty that Ken Livingstone and others would turn them into a referendum on saving the GLC and the Met Counties.

Even with all this excitement of late, local government battles are hardly the sexiest thing in British political life. But there are over 10,000 Tory councillors, as against under 400 Tory MPs. It is this backdrop against which the rest of politics will be played out in the months ahead: Mrs Thatcher's insensitivity over family influence-peddling; the handover of sovereignty in Hong Kong; the expense of Fortress Falklands; her on-again-off-again love affair with Ronald Reagan. The explosion of discontent with Mrs Thatcher will not overtly come over local government. But it may turn into Mrs Thatcher's equivalent of Mr Callaghan's travails over devolution. □

Peter Kellner is on holiday.

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A call to reason

A hundred years ago at the Conference of Berlin, European men began the process of dividing up Africa into colonial possessions. This year, as part of the centenary activities, Kwame Touré was to have toured Britain speaking about the consequences of this act for Africa and black people. He has been prevented from doing this by the British Home Office. But in preparation for the tour, Mr Touré spoke in Britain last September. We publish here extracts from a speech he made then, on the basis of which the Home Office made its decision

David Hoffman

Kwame Touré was born Stokely Carmichael in Trinidad and went to the US as a child. He came to prominence in the 1960s as a civil rights leader and then as one of the first enunciators of black power ideology. In 1968 he went to live in Africa and since 1972 has been living and studying in Guinea from whose President he took his new surname. He is a leading member of the All African People's Revolutionary Party.

Daughters and sons of Africa, comrades in the struggle for humanity, we greet you.

Africa is the richest continent on the face of the earth. And the people of Africa, wherever you find us – on the continent or off the continent – are the poorest people on the face of the earth.

This contradiction will only be resolved through revolution – and by revolution we mean the total destruction of imperialism and the construction of a socialist system. Then Africa will be free, then all people will be free. We say the instinctive love of justice of human beings alone ensures this, but for the process to be properly effective calls for proper reasoning. Brothers, Sisters, we come to help, as the Rastafarians, we must come to reason.

Our people suffer, we are victims of racism, we are victims of capitalism and we are landless people. Even in Africa, which belongs to us, even today, with so many independent countries, the overwhelming majority of our regimes are reactionary, neocolonial puppet regimes. Here, even where we have a national anthem and a flag and a President, our resources are still taken, are ripped from us and sent abroad, leaving us nothing. The struggle which we face must be a ruthless struggle, without pity. The only solution for the African revolution is Pan Africanism.

The history of Pan Africanism is not new, it found its organisation and expression right here in London in the 1900s. It has gone on and on; in 1945 in Manchester, at the fifth Pan African congress, its most important decisions were made. Here it was decided no longer to appeal to the imperialist powers to alleviate our suffering, but to appeal directly to the masses of our people, the only makers of history, to organise them in a direct confrontation with imperialism. Here a correct and proper decision was made – Africa must be unified and the economic system must be a socialist system.

The struggle which we face we say is a profound one. You will find Africans born in Jamaica who will tell you 'I ain't no African'. You will find Africans born in America who will tell you that they want nothing to do with Africa. You will find Africans born right here in Britain who will tell you they see no relation between their struggle and the struggle of Africans. You will find Africans born on the continent of Africa who will leave Africa and come to Europe and have nothing to do with them. Imperialism, which suppresses us on every level, has come even in the level of educaton, to confuse us about Africa and alienate us from Africa.

My Brothers, my Sisters, I tell you honestly, any time you see an African who is ashamed of Africa, this African is totally ignorant about anything African. Africa has been trampled upon and raped by just about everybody, but Africa has never raped or trampled upon anybody. Misunderstanding of our love of Africa, misunderstanding of our pride in Africa has to do with the process of political education, our people are politically backward.

Until we come to understand Africa, understand that we are Africans, we will not know what our interests are and will find ourselves fighting *for* capitalism, thinking we are advancing humanity. Any African serving in the army in Britain – who has no business there in the first place – could never find himself fighting in Ireland, if he has the slightest understanding of the history there. Africa has been raped and plundered by every Western country except Ireland. When Ireland is involved in a struggle against British Imperialism, consequently it is our job to aid them in the struggle.

I say the problem is one of total ignorance. We could spend more than two weeks here, just speaking of the contribution which Africa has made to world civilisation.

We have said the people have an instinctive love of justice. This is to be found everywhere – that is to say we have never found a society without religions. All these religions vary widely in their form and their ritual; but one common essential thread runs through them – religions are here to make men and women live a better life, to serve a just God and to fight against injustice all the time.

All of us, then, must come to respect religion – even those of us who are atheist must respect religions, because they manifest the aspiration of the masses of the people all over the world. Africa's contributions to religions are great. Every man or woman who has read the Bible, anyone who knows anything about the history of Judaism knows that this was Africa's gift to the world – Judaism began in Egypt in Africa.

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You have a responsibility, even if you are not of the Jewish religion, to defend the integrity of Judaism. It is for this reason that all conscious Africans must, without pity, uncompromisingly oppose Zionism everywhere. This immoral, unjust, race system, seeking to take a religion which was brought to serve God, and used to uproot the Palestinian people, will face complete and total destruction.

Some of us who are Christians are confused about Christianity. I heard one of my brothers the other day say 'I ain't got nothing to do with that white man's religion'. Oh my Brother, look properly at Christianity. If one would read the Bible, the first country mentioned in the Bible is Ethiopia. Depending upon the version of the Bible you have, this Ethiopia might be spelt 'Cush' or 'Kush'. If you would go to an authoritative source, you will see Kush is the ancient name for Ethiopia.

The first church in the world was in Africa, the first monastery in the world was in Africa, the very intellectual development of the church itself was the result of Africans, in Alexandria – why St Augustine ain't nothing but an African. Everywhere you will find it – when Jesus Christ was in trouble, his mother took him to Egypt and it is here that he spent ten years growing physically, spiritually and morally. Anyone who has any cursory understanding of the life of Jesus Christ knows that he never saw Europe. It took 400 years after the death of Jesus Christ to consolidate Christianity in Europe. As a matter of fact, Jesus Christ can be just about any colour, but the one colour he definitely could not be is white!

Islam did not develop in Africa, it developed in Saudi Arabia, in Mecca. The leader, the great Prophet Muhammed, like all great religious men, was a fighter against injustice. His first line of battle was the feudal lords of Mecca. They came to fight him when he was not prepared and he had to retreat. In retreating he came forward to his disciples and he told them, 'Go to Africa, there you will find proper recognition'. His disciples went to Ethiopia. But the Ethiopians had political, diplomatic and commercial relations with the feudal lords of Arabia, who demanded that the Ethiopian King hand the disciples over so they could be executed. The Ethiopians refused. Not only did they refuse, they protected them, respected them, spiritually, physically and bodily.

We speak not only of the contributions of Africa to Islam but of the contributions of Africans to Islam. Everyone who knows anything about Islam has heard the name Bilal. Bilal was an African slave, freed by the disciples of the Prophet Muhammed. The Prophet Muhammed was an illiterate, he couldn't read or write. When he recited the Holy Koran, it was written down by those around him, and Bilal did a lot of writing of the Holy Koran.

MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS do you know that the overwhelming majority of the masses of our people do not know of Africa's contribution to these great religions, even though they adhere to them? Political education is the only answer. Constant political education.

We said the economic system must be that of scientific socialism and here we must do some serious work. Socialism is a science, it must be studied. Marxism-Leninism is not religion. One can catch religion overnight, one can say 'oh, I feel God' and be religious. But, one cannot overnight be a revolutionary. Revolution must be studied. Indeed, even in religions there is study. The Christian goes to church every Sunday, and has Bible readings, the Moslem goes to Mosque, prays five times a day, and reads the Koran all the time – indeed, recites it by memory. The Jew goes to the Synagogue and studies the Torah. If then we are revolutionary and say we come to make the most important contribution in our lives, the struggle for the liberation of our people, how do we think that we can do this without proper study?

In order to be revolutionary we must study the forces that oppose us, what forces we have at our fingertips, what means we have, and how to use these means to attack the enemy in his weakest spot, all the time building and getting stronger until finally we liquidate from the face of the earth those backward systems that oppress all of us.

Are we struggling to bring about a free and socialist Britain, of course we are, there's no question here. A free and socialist Britain helps all the world. It will stop exploiting us. Give consciousness to the white working class, stop them from being racist, yes, it helps us. But, is it our primary struggle? No sir. As the conscious Irishman, born in London, understands his primary struggle is the liberation and unification of Ireland, so too, you who are born in Britain must understand our primary struggle is the total liberation and unification of Africa.

Once you know you are fighting for socialism in Africa, you know Britain is our major enemy, you hit the enemy anywhere you find him. You are impelled into struggle, you hate British imperialism more, because not only does it affect you but it affects your people everywhere, consequently your wrath is greater against it. Pan Africanism is the only solution to our problems.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS we say that in order to wage revolution it must be done in an organised manner. This is our greatest problem. If you will look at our people all over the world, wherever you find us, you will find that we are disorganised. Go to the United States of America, go to Harlem, we're disorganised there. Go the length and breadth of the Caribbean, go to Trinidad, where I was born, we are disorganised there. Go to the African continent, you will find we are disorganised there.

In 1981, throughout Britain we had spontaneous rebellions. The police were unprepared for that. Consequently, as the brothers say in the States, they were caught with their pants down. But you must not think that in 1983 they're in the same position as they were in 1981. In 1983 they are better organised, using better instruments of technology to oppress us. Consequently, when we come up against them we must be better organised in '83 than we were in '81.

Organisation is exactly what we want. Spontaneous rebellion will never bring the enemy down, never. It is only organised struggle on a day-to-day basis that can chip a little piece here, a little piece there, a little piece here, a little piece there, until he comes down. Africa doesn't lack anything to defeat the enemy except this – organisation. We'd have no problem even in Britain, once our people are properly organised, all we would demand is that each of them give 25 pence a week, and we would have enough money to do everything that we need to do inside of Britain, without asking anybody for anything.

Because we are oppressed, imbued with inferiority complexes, many of us think that our people are not capable of producing ideology, therefore, the lazy among us seek everywhere to snatch ideology and bring it to us. No, we must bring forth our own ideology, based on our own struggle.

Of course we need not mention that in organisation one needs people. Above all the people must have fidelity to the line of the organisation, to its ideology. It is this area that you find us lacking the most. Most of our people are not faithful to anything, except material benefits. I'm not speaking of the masses of our people, I'm speaking of that petit-bourgeois element which makes up the leadership of our people. It is only the masses, properly organised, who will keep them faithful to the ideology.

Africa will be free, unified, and socialist. The only question you must ask yourself is: what contribution shall I make to my people's liberation? Africa will be free, unified and socialist, no force on earth can stop it. The only question you must ask yourself is: what contribution as a human being do I make to the onward march of humanity? Daughters, sons of Africa, your mother is calling loud and clear, come now, organise with the African Revolution. Ready.

Ready for Revolution. □

Hackney Black People's Association hope to publish the full speech later in the year.

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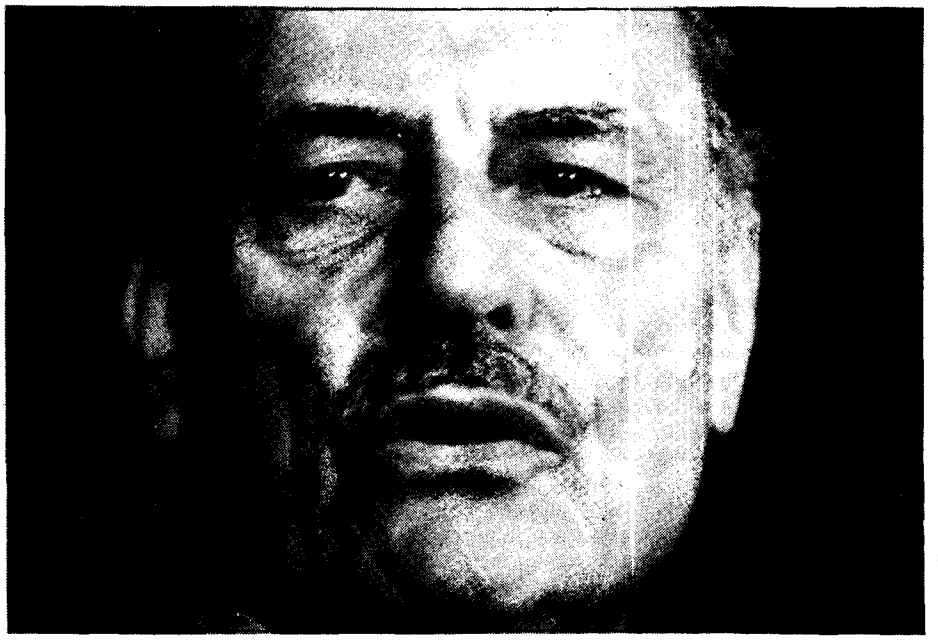
MONARCHY

Reigning consensus

Anthony Barnett analyses Enoch Powell's attack on the Queen



Camera Press

Enoch Powell: 'Queen more concerned for . . . a vociferous minority of newcomers than for the great mass of her subjects'

ENOCH POWELL'S assault on the present role of the Queen should not be dismissed as a bizarre joke. It followed Heath's defiant attack on Thatcher's policies, and if the timing was coincidence, the context is the same. Downing Street seeks to 'neutralise' the Tory dissidents. Powell denounces the Queen's concern with the Third World, her approval of racial harmony and integration, and – implicitly – her desire for consensus. To attack the monarchy in this manner is to aim at the keystone of the all-party, post-war order of Britain, and hence also at the Tory wets.

It is said that the Queen could no more get on with Edward Heath than all the others whom he brushed up the wrong way. It is political coincidence that it was Heath who purged Enoch from the Tory leadership after his 'Rivers of Blood' speech, and that Powell attacked Elizabeth II for being 'more concerned for the susceptibilities and prejudices of a vociferous minority of newcomers (ie blacks) than for the great mass of her subjects'. It was Heath who was a key author of the Brandt report. It is coincidence that, taking its cue from Powell's speech, the *Sunday Telegraph* suggested 'Her Majesty . . . seemed unaware in her Christmas broadcast that the Brandt report on Third-World poverty was very far from being the gospel truth'.

Coincidence, then, but a convenient one. For in politics it pays to take the fight into the enemy camp. The Conservative hard right want to crush those whom they have termed the 'grandees' of the Conservative Party – Pym, Heath, Gilmour and company. They fear them as the opponents most likely to take over, should the economy swing into a downturn. For their part, the grandees are now staking out their positions for a leadership struggle during the coming years of a safe Conservative majority. What better way for the Thatcherites to counter-escalate, than to threaten the grandest grandee of them all, the present holder of the Crown?

Furthermore, the Queen has 'asked for it'. Her demand, in her Christmas address, that we should hear less about nationalism and more about interdependence seems to have been regarded as an unwarrantable political intervention from the throne, by the hard right. Then there was the Queen's role (or lack of it) during the Falklands. No member of the royal family attended the victory march-past in the City of London. They were present, however, at the St Paul's memorial service, where reconciliation was the keynote, rather than jubilation.

POWELL KNOWS WELL enough that the Queen's attachment to her Commonwealth role is her own. So he demanded that the advice given to her about her speeches be changed. In part this was a nicety, a piece of rhetorical trimming, to allow him to deny that he was criticising the Monarch herself. But he was also addressing himself to Thatcher, urging the Prime Minister to give more emphatic and unequivocal advice to the Palace henceforth. In particular, that the Queen cease to speak out in favour of 'newcomers' in Britain, or for the poor in the Third World. Instead, from now on, she should be clearly advised to speak as the 'British Monarch to the British nation'.

Elizabeth Windsor will almost certainly reject such advice, especially if it is given her by Margaret Thatcher. Enoch Powell is a highly logical man, with a mind that seeks out clear consequences. It may not have escaped him, therefore, that he is demanding a showdown between Queen and government the result of which could be to force an abdication.

That might sound improbable, yet Powell has already lived through one successful abdication crisis and he is nothing if not determined to carve out a Britain that fits his idea of 'the British nation'. Something that, in his view, goes on forever, unlike the occasional inheritors of the throne.

His speech made this pretty clear. In it Powell stresses that 'the Crown rules by consent'. Indeed, Powell argues that such national consent is 'indispensible and essential'. More than that, he continues: 'The consent defines the nation; *in the last resort, the consent defines the Sovereign.*' (My emphasis, his carefully chosen words.)

As the agent that transmits national consent, Powell holds the government to be responsible for the Sovereign's statements, through its advice. He urges that the advice given should in fact run counter to the known concerns and inclinations of the present Queen. *Ergo*, she must either allow herself to be 'redefined', or replaced as Sovereign.

To the Conservative right, Britain means 'kith and kin'. After the sell-out in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia to them – and it was a settlement, incidentally, in which the Queen played a definite role) this means Gibraltar, the Falklands and, above all, Ireland. The rest, all the coloured countries, can go stuff themselves.

The very role of the Crown as Sovereign of Church and nation, the monarchy's long duration, its necessary flexibility, and even the weakness inherent in its dependence upon consent, all mean that the Queen and her advisors are obliged to value continuity, consensus and the diminution of strife and division. Thatcherism, if it means anything – and it has been much over-puffed by the left – revels in contestation, conviction politics and the end of consensus. That Thatcherism spelt the end to the Baldwinite tradition was clear. Perhaps it was less obvious – or at least less thinkable – that this would also bring it into confrontation with the monarchy. Yet that institution was salvaged and given its contemporary form by Baldwin himself, when he brought off the 1937 abdication with such aplomb.

New Statesman readers may ask: What should the left think? All I can say is: 'Watch out, and keep your republicanism dry.' Since the late 1970s the Communist Party of Great Britain (sic) has been seeking a 'national-popular bloc' to stop Thatcher from her supposedly fascistic escapades. Eric Hobsbawm floated the idea of a positive alliance with the SDP-Liberal coalition, but that gained little enthusiasm. Have Heath and the Queen finally come to the rescue? What better symbol to counter Thatcher's Union Jack than the escutcheon of the House of Windsor? What better symbol of national-popular resistance to the cuts, than the Crown? Can we now await a polite interview with the Royal Equerry in *Marxism Today*? □

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SHIPBUILDING

Sinking feeling

Rob Edwards reports on the 'work-on' at Scott Lithgow

THE WORKERS at the threatened Scott Lithgow shipyard on the Clyde have a problem – their public image. Since the former chairman of British Shipbuilders, Sir Robert Atkinson, described them as 5,000 deaf men last year, it has been an open season for insults.

The Prime Minister has condemned their record as abysmal and Scottish Secretary George Younger has contrasted their performance unfavourably with 'people taken off the paddy fields in South Korea.'

The truth, however, is somewhat different. The yard's current crisis was caused by Britoil's decision last month to cancel an £88 million oil rig order which was two years behind schedule.

The company has conspicuously refused to criticise the workforce in public. If pressed in private, senior executives will apportion 80 per cent of the blame for the delay on management and just 20 per cent on the workers.

Research carried out by Dr Robert Kelly of Strathclyde University's Industrial Relations Department shows dramatic improvements in workers' performance at the yard. Since last October, productivity, measured by the amount of welding and overall output, has increased by 45 per cent. Over the last three years absenteeism has dropped 40 per cent (from 17 per cent to 10 per cent of working days lost); the number of accidents at work has fallen by 85 per cent (from an average of 27 a month to 4); and the number of days lost because of disputes has decreased by 95 per cent from 3.6 per cent to 0.17 per cent per annum.

Faced with the daunting prospect of closure, the unions have recently made a series of major concessions.

A national strike scheduled for earlier this month was called off and trade unions at the yard have agreed to accept a package of revolutionary new working practices in return for a commitment to the yard's future.

To combat enforced redundancies (300 at the start of this week and a further 2,200 threatened by March) the Scott Lithgow workers have just begun a successful 'work-on', a new form of industrial protest in which those who have been sacked turn up for work with colleagues paying a £2 per head levy to subsidise their wages.

The idea is to 'capture the imagination of the Scottish public' and to show that the men are willing and anxious to work.

The cause of Scott Lithgow's current problems dates back to the late 1970s when, because of a scarcity of merchant shipping work, there were moves into the new and difficult area of offshore technology. The yard successfully completed two drillships, but delivered an Emergency Support Vessel, the Iolair, late.

In 1980 it was designated as British Shipbuilders' lead offshore yard and gained two further orders.

One was an oilrig for British Petroleum – now almost completed – and the other was the doomed 2002 rig for Britoil.

In retrospect it is obvious that Scott Lithgow had bitten off more than it could chew.

A report last week from Strathclyde Regional Council points out that 'no other construction yard in the world has yet built an offshore vessel with such a strenuous specification.'

The 2002, designed to operate in depths of 4,500 feet, is one and a half times the size of the BP rig and has double the tonnage of steel.

Closure of the yard would be Scotland's most damaging industrial bodyblow for decades. Over 4,000 jobs would be immediately lost with perhaps as many again the victims of 'knock-on' effects in the economy. The unemployment rate in the locality would double overnight with traumatic consequences for the nearby communities of Greenock and Port Glasgow, where the vast majority of the workers live.

Strathclyde's report argues that the yard represents a strategically important national asset which, if lost, 'could lead to the eclipse of a UK presence in this sparse industry'. There are, the report reckons, up to seven major offshore projects likely to be up for grabs this year, with the prospect of a greatly expanded market in the future.

A major campaign involving trade unions, local management, politicians of all parties, religious leaders, and newspapers north of the border has swung into action to save the yard. Trade unions and Labour politicians have argued that the government should intervene and British Shipbuilders should renegotiate the Britoil contract – so far without any sign of success. Others have tended to focus on the possibility that a private buyer might be found for the yard – a solution that would probably still involve thousands of redundancies. According to one senior trade unionist: 'They are clever bastards. They've been going to privatise it all along – only we didn't see it.'

The campaign has had some successes, such as persuading the *Glasgow Herald* to change its position and fight for the yard's survival. But there is a strong feeling that the seriousness of the situation has not been fully appreciated by politicians and the media in London. 'They don't seem to understand that this would not be just another Scottish industrial closure, it would be a great loss nationally,' said one activist. 'Scotland only seems to hit the headlines when it has bad weather.'

Anxiety is expressed that Labour leader Neil Kinnock could not be persuaded to attend next Friday's public meeting on the crisis organised by Inverclyde District Council. The meeting is to be addressed instead by deputy leader Roy Hattersley, as well as Liberal leader David Steel and Scottish National Party leader Gordon Wilson.

Last year, when the future of the massive Ravenscraig steel plant was in doubt, George Younger made it plain that, if it closed, he would resign. The battle he fought in Cabinet was undoubtedly influential in winning a reprieve for the plant. Unfortunately he has taken no such stance on Scott Lithgow.

Instead he seems prepared to sit by and watch the yard go under.

If that happens, there is a widely-shared but unspoken assumption that the workers, driven to despair by months of uncertainty and abuse, are not likely to repeat the historic struggle for survival fought by Upper Clyde Shipbuilders twelve years ago. Defeat, if it comes, will be final. □

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CANNABIS

The costs of prohibition

Less harmful than sugar – or a sure sign of decadence? Bob Woffinden looks at Paul McCartney's claims

ONLY ICELAND among West European countries retains more punitive sanctions than Britain for cannabis possession. The drug, otherwise known as marijuana or hashish, was originally proscribed almost by accident. European delegates to the Second International Opium Conference in Geneva in 1924 had never heard of it, but they were swayed by the impassioned antipathy to it of an Egyptian doctor and tacked it on the controlled list.

By the late '40s marijuana was becoming part of the lifestyle of Jack Kerouac and the Beat Generation, but it only spread round Britain in the mid '60s when the Beatles helped to popularise it. In response to a vocal lobby pressing for the liberalisation of the cannabis laws, the Wilson government set up the Wootton committee. This recommended that cannabis be placed in a category of its own for legal purposes, with minimal penalties for its possession. By then, however, the Labour administration was trying to stem the permissive tide. In January 1969 Home Secretary James Callaghan rejected the proposals. Legislation was passed instead by the Heath government. In the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act, cannabis was listed as a class 'B' – ie a dangerous drug.

Since then, the cannabis controversy has generated worldwide research into its effects. Three major reports have appeared in recent years. The World Health Organisation and the Ontario Addiction Research Foundation jointly produced a report investigating the effects of cannabis on health in spring 1981; the following year the Institute of Medicine in Washington published the results of research which had cost nearly $500,000 and, similarly, in the UK the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (established under the 1971 Act) published a detailed report in 1982 on the effects of cannabis use.

According to *Druglink*, the newsletter of the Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence (ISDD), the three reports together demonstrated 'that the healthy individual has little to fear from occasional moderate cannabis use'. Two particular areas of concern were identified. Cannabis increases the pulse rate, so it would be inadvisable for anyone suffering from heart disease to take it; and, naturally, any smoking affects the lungs because of the inhalation of tar and carbon monoxide.

The reports also concluded that cannabis impaired short-term memory and adversely affected a user's ability to handle machinery or to drive, although US research has never established a positive correlation between cannabis use and road accidents, in contrast to the high correlation between alcohol and road accidents.

All were circumspect in their conclusions and recommended further research; but the two most serious theories about cannabis use – that it was addictive, or that it led inexorably to hard drug-taking – were both shown to have no validity. Neither were the long-term effects damaging. (A 1980 report on chronic marijuana use in Costa Rica* failed, to its authors' surprise, to discover any ill effects of long-term cannabis use.)

EVEN MORE surprising to its opponents is the fact that cannabis has a range of well-established medical uses. 'In the US it is generally available as an anti-nausea agent and administered to patients receiving chemo-therapy treatment for cancer', explained Don Aitken, spokesman for the Legalise Cannabis Campaign (LCC). 'It is also used in the treatment of glaucoma, and could possibly be used for therapeutic purposes. Clinical trials with synthetic analogues of the active principles of cannabis are in progress, but of course no drug company is interested in sponsoring research into cannabis use because the results would not be patentable.'

In view of all this, cannabis is in a unique position. It is the only substance which the UK classifies as a dangerous drug which is not dangerous. The fact that it is illegal has caused great damage to UK society, according to Lord Melchett, Minister of State at the Northern Ireland office in the last Labour government and an LCC sponsor:

> Its illegality has exacted a toll of personal misery and suffering. On one level this is caused by being strip-searched, for example, or locked up in police stations; but some individuals pay a higher cost. Students may lose job opportunities; doctors or teachers may lose actual jobs. It is a huge infringement of individual liberties for a quite inadequate justification.

The cost of administering the law is also considerable. In the years 1973-81, the total income received by the UK government in fines for cannabis-related offences was £666,000. Measurable costs were £11.5 million in imprisoning people and £3 million in court cases. Additionally, there are huge unquantifiable costs – of the time of police, customs officials, probation officers and others.

There have been social costs too. Though the bedraggled remnants of the '60s hippie sub-culture would justifiably claim to have been discriminated against, the most important victims have been the West Indians.

Although Lord Scarman's report barely referred to it, marijuana played an important background role in the breakdown of relations between police and the local communities that led to the urban riots of 1980-82. It provided the spark that ignited the fuse both in the St Pauls area of Bristol in April 1980 (a police drugs raid on the Black and White café); in Brixton in April 1981 (a police drugs stop-and-search operation); and in Notting Hill in April 1982 (again, a stop-and-search on suspicion of possessing drugs).

THE STREET price of cannabis has soared, from a few pounds per ounce in the late '60s to a top price of £100 by the early '80s. During this period, there were notable increases in alcoholism, heroin addiction and glue-sniffing among young people. There is little agreement among those studying drug use and abuse about whether these factors are related. Roger Lewis of the Drug Indicators Project affirmed that there is some evidence of overlap between heroin and cannabis users, because both drugs are supplied through illegal channels. In 1978-9, as heroin flooded into the country from Iran and Pakistan, it suddenly became much cheaper than cannabis. There are reported instances of dealers offering heroin instead of cannabis, he says. In the '60s, the authorities argued that to sanction the use of cannabis would lead to the use of hard drugs; in fact, the opposite may have been true – the unavailability of cannabis spurred hard drug-taking.

While cannabis legislation has remained unaltered in this country for over a decade, most European countries have modified theirs. Possession of a small amount of cannabis is no longer an offence in Italy. Spain has lately followed this lead. Fresh drug laws were part of a new penal code implemented by the Socialist government in June last year. The Netherlands has pursued enlightened policies for some years and has even tried to institutionalise cannabis dealing, largely to separate the trade from that in opiates (the hard drugs). Denmark has simply allowed legislation in respect of possession of cannabis to fall into disuse. No one has been prosecuted for the offence since 1967.

All this is in contrast to the situation in the UK. In 1982, there were 16,709 prosecutions in the UK for possession of cannabis. This made up 84 per cent of all drug offence convictions, compared with only 43 per cent in 1967. The 1983 Policy Studies Institute report found that two fifths of Londoners under 45 thought arrests for cannabis use should be the police's 'bottom priority'. Their report also showed that searching for cannabis was a common excuse for stopping black men – and that many black people were convinced that the police corruptly sold the seized cannabis.

Amendments to the 1982 Criminal Justice Bill, however, proposing lesser penalties for cannabis possession, were not accepted by the government, or the Lords when Liberal peer Lord Avebury put it to the vote. At the moment, only the Ecology Party supports the legalisation of cannabis. When the Labour chairman of the West Midlands police committee this week advocated liberalisation, so outraged were the Tory cries for his resignation that many Labour politicians may fear to follow his lead. □

*Ed William E. Carter; published by the Institute for the Study of Human Issues, Philadelphia, 1980.

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TORY PARTY

'Community' and Conservatism

The obscure subject of local government finance has caused the most serious split in Conservative politics since Mrs Thatcher first established her dominance. David Dale traces what trends in the party have come into conflict – and where the government might be going

RATE-CAPPING may have baffled accountants and councillors alike – but Tory rebels believe the Cabinet is riding roughshod over ground they know well and have nurtured. Local government reorganisation in 1972 reflected the dominance of the management theories which were to make Britain efficient. It should not be surprising that it is the Prime Minister, Edward Heath, and Environment Secretary, Geoffrey Rippon, of that era who should be leading the rebellion.

Unexpectedly, it is the Conservative party, with its self-proclaimed attachment to the constitutional status quo and a pride in its strong localist tradition, which has produced the governments most willing to undertake comprehensive reforms of the local government system. In the last 100 years there have been ten or more examples of major Tory legislation in this field. The cumulative effect of these interventions has been to extend the involvement and authority of the central state in local affairs; moreover, each successive intervention has entailed changing or abolishing the institutions and relationships established by a preceding Tory administration.

That the Conservatives have been and remain *the* party of local government reform presents a paradox inherent in their thinking on class and nation. In their attempt to appeal to the electorate *across* class divisions, the nation state is seen as the primary focus for unity and loyalty. But other, complementary forms are admitted. Thus, the family and Empire have served as rallying points for the Conservative cause. 'Community' is another important example and it underpins a wide and pervasive tradition of localism.

Following Burke, Conservatism had rejected the unbridled individualism of liberal political philosophy. Instead, it emphasised the essentially social basis of human existence: society is an organic entity based on interaction and shared values. As the sense of belonging to society develops from shared local experience, common interests, hierarchy and obligation, so society can be seen as a collection of communities. Local government should serve to manifest and preserve the interests and natural consensus of the community in the same way that national government should express and defend national interests. Local self-government thus demands high priority.

Localism is buttressed by Disraeli's claim that 'centralisation is the death-blow of public freedom'. Here local self-government also becomes a safeguard of the choice and diversity upon which liberty is founded, a defence against the inefficiency and arbitrary misuse of central power. It follows that the functions of government should normally be performed at the lowest level possible. However, this principle is usually qualified by the notion of a constitutional division of labour between central and local

Colin Wheeler

authorities – a balance which may equally be upset by local politicians interfering in national questions as by the centre meddling in local affairs (a belief that lies behind much Conservative criticism of the activities of Labour councils).

'Professionalism' has little place in this sort of community government. High value is placed on voluntary public service by 'fit and proper persons', and thus on small, limited local authorities for them to play a role in; equally, Conservatives have opposed the payment of councillors and the abolition of Aldermen. In addition, localism militated against the acceptance of party politics. The participation of nationally organised parties (themselves inclined towards the concentration of power and leadership) in local affairs was thought to import external conflicts that would disrupt community consensus and undermine local government's role as a bulwark against centralisation. This of course reflects the old social reality in more rural areas where those at the top of the 'organic' social hierarchy also ran the council in what they saw as an extension of their social role, rather than as an assertion of their specific political interest. However, there is evidence that this hostility to party politics was never entirely convincing in practice; it has certainly been modified substantially over the last forty years.

'GOOD HOUSEKEEPING' has always been the other basic principle of Conservative local government thinking. This means that rate-borne expenditure should be kept to a minimum and then undertaken only according to strict value-for-money criteria. Councillors are to regard themselves as mere trustees of the ratepayers' money. They must adopt a responsible, business-like approach to the conduct of local government. In the absence of this, the centre may be justified in taking remedial action, as Conservative Cabinets did in the 1930s to thwart the costly public works and poor relief programmes of some Labour councils.

Here, then, we find an inherent tension between the two fundamental principles of Conservative local government thinking. Localism expresses that strand of Conservatism for which *community* autonomy and decentralisation are necessary conditions for political liberty. Economy, on the other hand, directs attention away from the relationship between community and government and places a far stronger emphasis on the individual (who pays the rates). When 'economy' wins over 'community', local government loses its special status and comes to be seen as just another part of the machinery of public power which may itself be the major threat to individual freedom.

The two principles seem to be so opposed, that it would appear that one must always dominate. In practice the tension has usually remained within manageable bounds because of the nature of the Conservative party itself: the autonomy of the national elite to make policy and the remarkable loyalty of members have contained conflict which might otherwise have been expected to arise.

HOW DID THIS thinking adjust to the demands of the modern welfare state? The experience of 1945-51 bolstered localist sympathies as the Labour Government removed important functions from the control of local government and entrusted them to public corporations and ad hoc bodies (power,

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transport, health, etc.). The centre also imposed new statutory duties on local authorities, obliging them to establish specific committees and meet certain standards of service provision. The Conservative party attacked the concentration of power and growing bureaucratic interference, and warned of the threat to freedom posed by the restriction of both private and municipal enterprise at the local level. Churchill promised 'a new deal for local government . . . to reverse the centralising tendencies of socialism' and rekindle local vigour and autonomy. Butler went further, declaring himself in favour of the return to local control of power, transport and health functions.

While in opposition, then, the Conservative party agitated for the re-establishment of community self-government. However, on returning to office in 1951 this concern was subordinated to the practical difficulties of devolving major responsibilities to a multiplicity of small authorities which lacked resources to provide the services now expected. Conservative governments eschewed radical reform in favour of limited and piecemeal change in conjunction with the local authority associations. Local government thinking had to be tailored to new political realities. The commitment to localism was qualified, not in the name of economy, but as part of the social-democratic settlement of the post-war years.

By the mid-1950s the Labour and Conservative conceptions of local government had converged to a remarkable degree. But this equilibrium was soon to be upset. The twin pillars of the new social-democratic state – managed economic growth and efficient welfare provision – began to appear somewhat shaky. In the case of local government, the size, boundaries and methods of authorities came to be seen as obstacles to effective administration. Local government reform became a key objective of the drive to modernise the nation's political and economic systems from the end of the 1950s onwards.

The first steps in this direction were taken through the Local Government Act of 1958, which established Commissions to recommend improvements in the pattern of local authorities in England and Wales, and replaced most of the service-specific central grants to local government with a more manageable block grant. The Conservative government also embarked on a reform of the structure of London's local government which produced the GLC/Borough system of today.

ONLY AFTER they lost office in 1964 did Conservatives review comprehensively their local government policy. The party reacted to this defeat in much the same way as it had in 1945. That earlier response had included extending the Conservative presence in local government as part of a strategy to regain power nationally. Central Office encouraged the adoption of a more overt political profile in local affairs, providing a range of advice and resources to enable local Associations to fight elections on party lines. Formal machinery was established to co-ordinate Conservative activities on local authorities and to facilitate the representation of local interests to the party organisation and the national leadership.

Twenty years later these channels were renewed and improved as part of a general overhaul of Conservative organisation. Repeated successes in the annual rounds of council elections threw up a new generation of local Conservative leaders anxious to make their way in the party. The National Advisory Committee on Local Government carved out a more dynamic role for itself, meeting more frequently, spawning a variety of sub-committees on specific topics, and addressing itself more directly to issues of policy. Local government committees were encouraged at Area and constituency levels, in order to improve liaison between councillors and the party machinery. Leading councillors began to meet informally on a regular basis with Mr Heath and his shadow ministers. Conservative representatives on the local authority associations were organised to ensure that the control and political direction of these bodies reflected the party's dominance in local government. On the professional side, the local government office at Smith Square was strengthened by the secondment of three members of staff from the prestigious Conservative Research Department.

The most important arena for the development of local government policy was in the detailed reappraisal of the Conservative programme which continued throughout the latter half of the 1960s. Mr Heath's exercise in policy-making while in opposition involved over 30 policy groups researching particular problems, with their proposals being forged into a coherent strategy by the party leadership. One of these groups concentrated on the reform of local and regional government: under the chairmanship of Mr Rippon, its members included councillors, MPs, academics and the local government staff from Central Office. The group considered several broad options for reform, and reported in favour of a radical course to strengthen the powers and financial base of local government within the framework of a system of elected regional authorities. It was intended that the latter should take over important functions that could be devolved from central government departments and agencies.

While accepting the need for a major reorganisation of local government (which was also being urged by the Redcliffe-Maud Commission), Mr Heath and his colleagues drew back from the uncompromising localist solution thrown up from within the party.

Peter Walker was chosen to oversee the reform of local government in 1972. Significantly, there was no attempt to improve the system of local government finance – a measure seen by the localists as essential to restoring the strength and autonomy of local authorities. Indeed, the 1972 Act removed from local authorities their remaining functions in the fields of health and water, but made no mention of decentralising responsibilities away from national government.

From one perspective, Mrs Thatcher's government has broken decisively both from long-held Conservative views on local democracy and from the managerialism of the Heath era. The successive steps taken since 1979 to tighten central control of local spending have been made easier by the failure to reform the rating system in the previous decade. These steps have been part of the national strategy to move capital from the public to the private sector in the hope of stimulating growth. The Rates Bill has become necessary because previous measures have proved lacking in the sophistication and sanctions required to achieve the desired results. In this scenario, local autonomy is consciously sacrificed in the cause of national economic rejuvenation.

But, looked at from another perspective, the Rates Bill might represent a transitional stage in the grand scheme of political reform designed to move out of the constraints of social democracy once and for all. It is certainly possible to read into the wider local government policies of Mrs Thatcher's government the emergence of a radical new vision of local politics. Some geographical areas have been wholly or partially removed from the control of elected bodies through devices such as enterprise zones, urban development corporations and free-ports.

Similarly, there has been encouragement to remove functions from the sphere of local authority provision into private hands. These developments would tie in with the aim of rolling back the frontiers of the state throughout economy and society. The financial controls of today would then be temporary expedients designed to produce a very different system of local government that would be far less active in the field of welfare and more supportive of (and dependent on) private business concerns.

It is not yet certain whether the Rates Bill is intended to be simply a Treasury tool, an attempt to restore constitutional respect, or a part of a return to the nineteenth century: probably a hotch-potch of all three. What is clear is that the passions that have been aroused as the Bill passes through Parliament are unlikely to disappear, since they spring from deep-seated principles within the ambiguous Conservative conception of local government; and the Bill also raises fundamental issues relating to the continuing struggle inside the party over the way in which Conservatism should develop in the 1980s. □

THE RELIGION OF TRUTH

Truth is that which is. Our being aware more fully of this reality is a matter of the development of the relevant but normally dormant faculties. We can know much more about the inner and spiritual realms of nature than is generally realised. The religion of truth is a matter of direct experience rather than adherence to dogma and belief.

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DIARY

We continue our exclusive revelations from 'The Secret Diary of Margaret Hilda Roberts, aged 14¼', as edited by Sue Townsend

FRIDAY: I went to the woods after school to look for faggots (Mother's fault, she has been grossly extravagant with the coal and Father refuses to order more until the price drops in the summer). I had collected a decent bundle and was dragging it back towards the track when a shambling figure emerged from behind a tree and cried 'For God's sake, Margaret, have pity!' There was something about the uneasy vowels that was familiar, but his unshaven face and lank ungroomed hair put him outside my social circle. 'It's Cecil', he croaked. 'Put down those faggots and come to me.' Cecil Parkhurst! Making his first public appearance since Angela Porke-Cracklin went to Switzerland.

There was rather a poignant pause, during which snow fell, then I said: 'I have heard that you have fathered a daughter called Stork, or Echo, or some such silly name. Is this true?' Cecil sobbed 'Yes', then turned and stumbled into a snow-filled ditch saying 'I may be gone for some time'.

I peered down at him and said: 'If only the child had been named Agnes, or Mary, or Edna, then there may have been hope for your eventual return to the chairmanship of the Methodist Youth Club, but to name a child after a margarine . . .'

From the bottom of the ditch Cecil looked up imploringly. I choked. (My pear drop had gone down the wrong way.) 'Is there anything I can do?' 'Perhaps a small jar of Brylcreem now and again?' he whispered. Then we parted – I to my glittering future, he to mull over his past.

SATURDAY: Father caught me reading *Lady Lavinia's Handkerchief*, the cheap Victorian novel that has given me such illicit pleasure for the past three nights. He ceremoniously burnt it on the range, his eyes glittering with a strange demonical pleasure, his lips curled in contempt. He spat out: 'Such a book will influence your written English, Margaret. I do this to save you future torment at university'. I left the room holding my crimson-shamed cheeks. I passed Mother on the stairs. She giggled and said: 'Gone, gone and never called me Mother.' So it was she who betrayed me, the fiend!

SUNDAY: Thank God for the Methodist church. I went to all three services today and have now come to my senses. Father has forgiven me for my behaviour of the past few days. He said: 'Young people have things called emotions'. He advised me to suppress them. I think it is working. I haven't whispered Cecil's name for hours.

MONDAY: A cocky, red-haired youth came into the shop tonight. I sold him half an ounce of shag and a box of throat lozenges. During this brief transaction he quizzed me closely about our prices. I detected a note of criticism in his rasping voice. He was joined by a jowly youth who asked if we sold *Wisden's*, the cricketing yearbook. I snapped: 'Certainly not! This is a grocery shop'. The jowled one said: 'All right, kiddo. Give me a bottle of Parker's blue ink, three exercise books and nine stamps.' I enjoyed telling him that the Post Office section was closed.

The effect it had on him was extraordinary. He paled and said: 'But I've got nine articles of 1,500 words to write before the last post'. His friend quivered with rage and lilted: 'I demand that you give this man ink and paper. Failure to do so will deprive England of a brilliant essayist'. Thinking of my own soberly written essay, 'A Day in the Life of Garibaldi', I sneered: 'Fear not for English literature for its future is secure.' And turned them out of the shop.

TUESDAY: Old Mr Powell has caused a furore in Leicester. He made a speech criticising our beloved Royal Family, accusing them of harbouring Internationalist sympathies. The news has only just trickled through to Grantham on account of the late running of the Leicester train (cow on the line) and the difficulty of translating his speech from the original Greek.

WEDNESDAY: Mrs Arkwright has put a card in the shop window with the following wording: 'Widow offers clean lodgings (own beds) to two young gentlemen. Modern outside privy and use of tin bath to be agreed. No Conservatives need apply.' I am sorry that Father agreed to display the card but, then again, as he said, 'A penny a week is not to be sneezed at'.

THURSDAY: Redhead and Jowls came back, asking for supplies of shag, ink and paper. From their high-spirited conversation I gathered that they had taken up residence at Mrs Arkwright's. It also explains why she came in this afternoon triumphantly waving a pound note.

ROGER WODDIS

The Foggy, Foggy Mind

'There has been no prediction of the sudden deepening of the recession. That caught everyone by surprise.' – President Reagan

When I was a Hollywood movie star,
I worked at the actor's trade,
And the only, only thing I did that was wrong
Was to head for the big parade.
I wowed them when I said the worst
Had all been left behind;
And the only, only thing I did that was wrong
Was to ventilate my foggy, foggy mind.

One day I learnt, as I began
A speech I'd well rehearsed,
The bubble of prosperity
(Surprise, surprise) had burst.
The mounting budget deficits
Were of an awesome kind;
I should have seen the writing on the wall,
But it never crossed my foggy, foggy mind.

I might – or might not – run again
In the Presidential race;
But I sure want to star in a video
Of a peaceful war in space.
The way ahead is dark as hell
And the pilot's flying blind;
And the passengers would suddenly start to pray,
If they saw into my foggy, foggy mind.

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Lunch with Mohammad

The Iranian revolution seemed to replace one tyranny with another, but, as Fred Halliday relates, for some the Mullahs have built a 'wonderful democracy'

Camera Press

How the Iraqis see the Ayatollah, whose disciple says of the Iran-Iraq war: 'There will be no peace, no compromise. The whole world has taken note of us.' (Iraqi wall-poster)

'WE DON'T give a damn for the United Nations. We don't give a damn for Western public opinion. We don't give a damn for that bloody organisation, Amnesty International. We don't give a damn what anyone in the world thinks.

'We have made an Islamic Revolution and we are going to stick to it, even it it means a third world war. We're not worried. If we have to blow up the whole of America, we'll do it. And if we discover how to kill thousands and thousands of people by releasing bacteria from four hundred boxes in different parts of the US and if this is the only way we can defend ourselves in some future confrontation with the States, then we'll do that. We want none of the damn democracy of the west, or the so-called freedoms of the east. We represent a third way.'

Mohammad had never been one for understatment. In the old days I had known him as a laggard member of the Iranian opposition in western Europe. A womaniser, drunkard and an intermittently engaging raconteur, he had epitomised the secular intelligentsia of Iran in exile. He hated the *akhunds* and the clergy, and he looked back to the nationalist leadership of Dr Mosadeq's premiership of the early 1950s.

Then came the revolution. The jokes about Khomeini increased. And then he went back, and disappeared. Some said his socialist path had put him at odds with the regime. Then there was rumour that he had succumbed to secret police pressure and became an informer for SAVAK. Perhaps the files had now been opened. Then it emerged that he had become an ardent supporter of the Khomeini regime, a born-again Muslim. Could it be true?

'I have never changed my point of view. I have always been for the oppressed, the *mostazafin*, which is a far more precise term than proletariat. We have made a *mostazafin* revolution in Iran. The people are really free, and for the first time since the period of Mosadeq, Iran has a popular government.'

Mohammad is keen to tell us of the need to reject western values and western culture. Gone are the socialist books from his bookshelf. Now he announces that he has discovered the wonderful writings of Ayatollah Motahari. He has read all 60 volumes of his works. I suggested this was all obscurantist rubbish. No, he told me, it was all derived from the Koran.

'There are no human rights violations in our country,' he told me. 'Of course, you cannot go against what the Koran says. If it lays down 80 lashes, you cannot just give 79. And I'm sure that when Mr Lajevardi, the head of Evin prison in Tehran, orders an execution he sincerely believes he is doing it for God. Maybe some local groups mistreat

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prisoners without authorisation. But no torture is allowed by the government.' And the reports from abroad? 'That's the work of our enemies. We know them. The Bahais, the Zionists, the Mojahidin and the rest. They're using the tricks we used to have when we were in the opposition against the Shah, like the pregnant woman story. They say that pregnant women have been shot in Iran. That's something I always used to say Whenever you wanted to get attention for some story about prison conditions under the Shah, you'd throw in something about a pregnant woman being shot. I did it all the time.'

MOHAMMAD has no sympathy for those who have died fighting Khomeini. 'They've killed twice as many of our people as we have of theirs,' he says. Over 7,000 *hizbollahis* – literally 'party of God people', ie supporters of Khomeini – have been assassinated by the opposition. We have killed only about 3,500 of them. My son,' he tells me, 'has to sleep with his rifle by his bed. He guards the local mosque. Three of his teenage friends have already been shot by the opposition.'

The war with Iraq is a particular source of pride. 'We have one million people at the front, half the army of China. They will go on fighting till the whole Ba'thist regime in Iraq is overthrown. The removal of Saddam Hussein will not be enough.

'We are pausing now, because to press on would involve terrible loss of life. But there will be no peace, no compromise. The whole world has taken note of us. We are a small nation of 40 million people. But we have our one million people at the front, many of them teenagers.

'We have a new word in Persian, an "RPG-*zand*" – an RPG rocket thrower. The Iraqi tanks know to fear them: they may kill sixteen of them, but the seventeenth person will get to the rocket and blow it up. You must understand the culture of martyrdom in our country.'

The Kurds too, so it seems, have had their just deserts. 'All those stupid KDP and Komeleh people you used to write about have all been cleared out now,' he said with pride. The regime will last because it is popular. 'You know,' he assured, 'Rosa Luxemburg would have been in ecstasy if she could have come to Iran now and seen the wonderful democracy we have created there.'

He sat there pleading with me to believe him, in his Islamic revolutionary khaki, and his shining Islamic Republican badge. We talked of a mutual friend, a socialist opponent of the Shah's who was killed by Khomeini's forces after the revolution. 'He made a terrible mistake,' Mohammad muses. 'I tried to warn him. I offered to help. If he had come to me, and told me where he had hidden 200 rifles it would have been all right. But I never heard from him, even though I gave him my telephone number. The next thing I heard from his family he was dead. They imagined that I could do something to locate his body. But I couldn't.' □

WEST GERMANY

Security madness

Tony Paterson on the dismissal of General Kiessling

Bonn

THE SCANDAL over the sacking of the West German Deputy NATO commander, General Gunter Kiessling for so far unsubstantiated 'security' reasons has managed to shake the foundations of Chancellor Helmut Kohl's coalition government.

But as a parliamentary inquiry was launched this week in an attempt to discover the truth, attention has focused on the agency behind Kiessling's dismissal – West German Military Intelligence, an organisation known by its initials, MAD.

The main basis for Kiessling's dismissal was evidence culled from a MAD investigation that claims to have irrefutable evidence that Kiessling was a regular visitor to gay bars in Cologne and thus a security risk.

But a report by a former government data protection chief has revealed that MAD has not restricted its activities to its officially designated area – protection of the armed forces.

A previously secret report by Hans Peter Bull, as data protection chief who was recently ousted by Kohl's Right-Wing Interior Minister Friedrich Zimmermann, has shown that since the 1950s MAD has spied illegally on thousands of West German citizens and kept their details stored on computer files.

MAD's targets range from a four-year-old East German boy who escaped to West Germany in 1974 to an 80-year-old grandfather whose identities and personal details were stored on MAD's computer files during security checks and apparently never erased.

In the case of the four-year-old, MAD reported that 'it could not be ruled out' that the boy might in future join the armed forces and therefore the fact that he escaped from East Germany had been noted for 'preventative' reasons.

Other targets included members of the West German peace movement, prominent professors, politicians, writers and journalists. One former liberal Free Democrat MP, Helga Schuchgardt was entered into MAD's files for signing a petition opposing the training of a Chilean officer in the West German army.

In another case the writer Berndt Engelmann and the Tubingen University Professor of Rhetoric (and peace campaigner) Walter Jens were stored in MAD files because they had signed a statement in 1975 that read: '30 years of freedom from Hitler fascism, 30 years in the fight for peace'.

Bull's report, published in the magazine Der Spiegel also revealed that the details on MAD files were frequently passed on to the police for use in their inquiries.

In the Kiessling affair, Defence Minister Manfred Woerner has staked his reputation and future on the findings of a MAD investigation into the General's background. So far it has emerged that MAD officers never actually identified Kiessling themselves, but used the local Cologne police to collect evidence against him.

In addition, photographs that were used to identify Kiessling have mysteriously disappeared since MAD carried out its investigation. Not surprisingly even the Chief government spokesman Peter Boenisch admitted this week that some of MAD's activities need 'examination.' □

CYPRUS

Time on his side

Christopher Price on the tactics of the Turkish 'President'

RAUF DENKTASH, the new, self-appointed President of the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' has certainly done well with his trappings of office. He now has a brand new Mercedes with special golden number plates, as do all his ministers, with registration numbers from 001 upwards. It's all part of his technique for personal control of his tiny (175,000 pop.) mini-state. Many other perks, gifts and shares (including Polly Peck ones) are distributed to those in high places in return for feudal loyalty. He is manifestly enjoying himself.

His unilateral declaration of independence in November was brilliantly timed (Turkey's new government was not quite installed, but US aid had been agreed) and even more brilliantly kept secret from the rest of the world.

What is not generally recognised, however, is that UDI probably spelled the end of the genuine democracy which has hitherto existed in the North of Cyprus. At the last Assembly elections, Denktash actually failed to get a majority in his own 'Parliament'. Only massive intervention from Turkey and some suspect defections maintained his control. The two left-wing parties led by Mr Durduran and Mr Ozgur were well known to be firmly opposed to UDI; yet on 15 November they voted for it.

Why? Mr Durduran, inhibited by others present, simply told me he had been given less than 12 hours notice and it seemed better to show solidarity. Mr Ozgur put it a little more clearly. 'The plane had already taken off,' he told me, 'and you get hurt if you jump out of planes in mid-air.' There have been reports that both were threatened with death if they failed to back UDI.▶

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Hitherto Northern Cyprus has avoided the political repression endemic in Turkey. That is clearly no longer the case. Denktash followed UDI by a unilateral enlargement of the Assembly with appointed members.

Though he has issued a statement suggesting that both sides refrain from provocation, Denktash readily admits that he intends rapidly to escalate separation further by issuing his own passports and banknotes. He also admits that his recent package of 'interim' cooperation measures is substantially a public relations operation. Though it contains some intelligent suggestions (like a bi-communal university, open to both sides), there is no indication that he has any greater desire for a realistic, final settlement than he ever had. He wouldn't mind a loose sort of confederation which restored his legality, gave him recognition and maintained his present powers. But that is something to which the Greek Cypriots could never agree. Their only weapon against the 20,000 Turkish troops in the North is the international isolation of Denktash and denial to him of international recognition.

There is little doubt, however, that, if there is no settlement soon, one by one the Islamic countries will begin to accept the *fait accompli* of his 'Republic'. Archbishop Makarios used to speak of the 'long struggle'. But Denktash knows that time is now on *his* side. As long as Turkey continues to back him militarily and economically (it now supports over 70 per cent of his budget) there is little that the Greek Cypriots can do to dislodge him.

Though NATO and the West have happily tolerated the stalemate and the charade of inter-communal negotiations for the past nine and a half years, they are now beginning to worry about the advent of 'double enosis' – Turkey and Greece, two NATO members, growling at each other across the blue berets of a UK force which has proved itself impotent to prevent conflicts in the past. It is this fear, as much as Denktash's snub to Congress, which explains the Reagan Administration's sudden interest in the problem. But the US has promised to pressurise Turkey for a settlement in the past and never seriously done so. If the present round of international initiatives fail, dangerous confrontation between Greece and Turkey could escalate quickly.

There are a few hopeful straws in the wind. Neither Greece nor Turkey want confrontation and will probably try quite hard to find a settlement. Ozal needs Western support and Reagan is his paymaster. The US has just promised $4.2 billion of military aid over the next ten years – over a third of it for 160 F16 bombers. If they wanted to, they could apply more substantial military and economic pressure than ever before.

The Greek Cypriot government has now made substantial territorial concessions and made formal proposals for a final settlement. All the Greek Cypriots I spoke to were desperately anxious for a settlement, but deeply gloomy about the possibility of one; and many were frightened that before long the Turks would decide to 'solve' the problem once and for all by taking over the whole island. □

PORNOGRAPHY

A law against it

Ruth Wallsgrove on a new approach to sexism in the US

CITY COUNCILLORS in one US city have voted to enable women to sue pornographers if they suffer an assault 'directly caused' by pornography or if they are forced to appear in it. But the Democrat mayor of Minneapolis, Minnesota, has vetoed the proposal and prevented it from being incorporated into the civil rights code.

The Minneapolis city council adopted the unique amendment which defined pornography as a form of sex discrimination at the end of December. It would have allowed women in the city to sue makers, sellers, distributors or exhibitors of pornography, if they had suffered because of it. A woman could even have sued her husband if he inflicted pornography on her against her will.

The amendment defined pornography as the 'sexually explicit subordination of women'. It included anything that showed women enjoying violence or presented them – or bits of them – as 'dehumanised' sexual objects. But as part of the civil rather than the criminal code, it did not make pornography a crime and so it would not have involved the police.

In defining pornography as discrimination, the amendment brought in the notion of sexual objectification and tackled violence and force in pornography. Obscenity was not mentioned, since that would have suggested that 'women's bodies are dirty'. Neither did it suggest that porn was only bad if it went against the 'prevailing community standards', which was the only way the US Supreme Court has ruled it can be banned under the First Amendment to the US constitution, which guarantees people's right of freedom of speech. Certainly, everyone involved believed that anyone sued under the new amendment would have tried to take their case as far as the Supreme Court.

It was partly these difficulties that prompted the mayor, Donald Fraser, to veto the amendment earlier this month. Although he publicly agrees that pornography is a serious problem for women, he thought that the amendment was vague and unenforceable. He also did not accept that pornography causes violence against women, which had been the argument of the amendment's authors Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon, two well-known radical feminists (the former wrote *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*; the latter is a law professor who was previously best known for her now influential work on sexual harassment as sex discrimination).

Having taught a course together in Minneapolis on pornography and the law, they were brought in by community activists to comment on proposals for restricting porn sales to certain zones of the city. They argued that zoning didn't tackle the real issues and would just inflict sex shops on poor neighbourhoods. They were then invited to come up with their own proposal.

The Minneapolis civil rights ordinances are liberal: they include sexual harassment at work as a form of sexual discrimination and are one of several in the US that protect gay rights. Some of the proponents of the pornography amendment felt that the mayor might have found it less 'vague' and so more acceptable if it had just gone for explicitly violent pornography and had allowed women to sue only if they could prove a specific relationship between an assault and a particular piece of porn.

Another worry was that, given the nature of civil rights codes, the amendment would have to have allowed suits by men against porn, too, if they felt it hurt them. It is all too easy to imagine this being used against gay literature, though even the most degrading gay male porn doesn't make men second-class citizens.

When the amendment was reintroduced on 13 January, only five councillors voted to override the mayor's vote. However, it is not lost yet. A committee has been set up to examine it and other approaches to the problem of pornography. It will report back on 1 May. Councillors in favour of the civil rights approach to porn think that, since four of those who voted against it were new council members, they only need time to be 'educated' about the problem before they, too, come to back it. One curious thing about the voting was indeed that it split more on the basis of length of time served as councillors than on gender or conventional politics (there were Republicans and Democrats, 'liberals' and 'conservatives' on both sides, and the women were split three to three).

Whatever happens in Minneapolis, the amendment has already sparked off discussion around America about the issues. Unhappily most newspaper commentators are using it to suggest a return to obscenity laws and the notion of respectability, something far from the minds of the feminists who drafted this controversial proposal. □

THIS ENGLAND

£3 book tokens for entries printed. (On postcards, please.)

□ More than 300 16-year-olds on the Government's Youth Training scheme are off to Butlin's for a week. And they'll be paid £25 each for the experience. It will build moral fibre, said spokesman. – *Southend Standard Recorder* (Louisa Hennessy).

□ A low-flying Phantom jet on a training exercise passed over Workington and caused a local man's expensive specimen of love bird to hit its head on the top of its cage and die as a result of a fractured skull. The man received compensation from the Ministry of Defence without an admission of liability. – *Cumbrian Weekly Digest* (David Riley).

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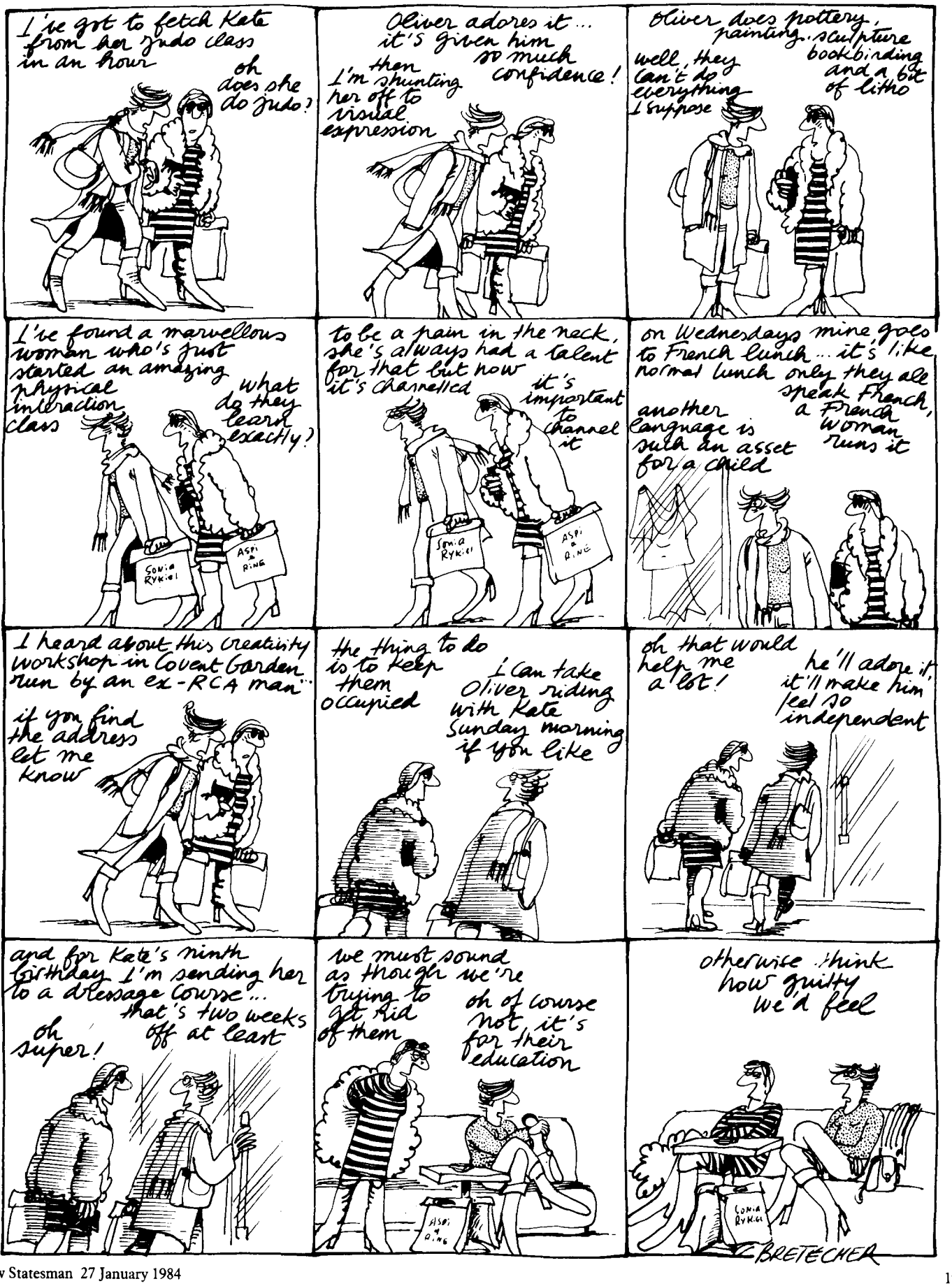
BRETECHER
MOTHER HENS


I've got to fetch Kate from her judo class in an hour
oh does she do judo?
Oliver adores it... it's given him so much confidence!
I'm then shunting her off to ritual expression
Oliver does pottery, painting, sculpture bookbinding and a bit of litho
well, they can't do everything I suppose
I've found a marvellous woman who's just started an amazing physical interaction class
what do they learn exactly?
SONIA RYKIEL
ASPI a RING
to be a pain in the neck, she's always had a talent for that but now it's channelled
it's important to channel it
on Wednesdays mine goes to French lunch... it's like normal lunch only they all speak French, a French woman runs it
another language is such an asset for a child
I heard about this creativity workshop in Covent Garden run by an ex-RCA man...
if you find the address let me know
the thing to do is to keep them occupied
I can take Oliver riding with Kate Sunday morning if you like
oh that would help me a lot!
he'll adore it, it'll make him feel so independent
and for Kate's ninth birthday I'm sending her to a dressage course... that's two weeks off at least
oh super!
we must sound as though we're trying to get rid of them
oh of course not it's for their education
otherwise think how guilty we'd feel
BRETECHER

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LETTERS

No sex: you're not British

Brian Sedgemore MP, House of Commons

Deborah Pugh's article (NS 20 January) on how the Home Office is getting nastier in its interpretation of the Immigration Rules certainly struck a chord with me.

Not so long ago, in deciding to confirm his decision to deport the Turkish Hasbudak family (that's Mr and Mrs Hasbudak and their two children, Fatih aged five and Zeynep aged seven and a half, both of whom were born in Britain) David Waddington MP, the Home Office Minister, seemed to be laying down a new code of conduct for immigrants seeking, on compassionate grounds, to be allowed to remain in the country.

When I went to see him at the Home Office, Waddington said that immigrants such as Mr and Mrs Hasbudak:
1) should not make love and have children;
2) should not seek popular support, demonstrate, or allow others to demonstrate on their behalf;
3) should not use the courts to seek to establish just what their rights are.

I would have thought that Waddington's first point was deeply offensive, an unwarranted intrusion into the intimate details of family life. Waddington summed up his position precisely by saying that it was 'irresponsible' of Mr and Mrs Hasbudak (who've been in this country eight years) and families like them to have children.

On the second point, Waddington made it clear that, while he accepted that people had a right to demonstrate, he was annoyed that little children from the William Patten School in Hackney – all of them, in fact – had visited the Home Office to plead that their classmates be allowed to stay in Britain, and had danced the Conga in the street outside the main entrance. This has left me with a suspicion that there was an element of spite in his decision to deport the family, who were able to present overwhelming compassionate grounds.

Waddington's third point – that the unsuccessful legal action taken by the Hasbudak family against the Home Office was 'wholly irresponsible' – comes ill from a lawyer and bodes ill for the future of civil liberties. While the Home Office continues to operate its intimidatory code of conduct, which defies human decency, the Hasbudaks have gone into hiding.

Alternatives to the Bomb

Peter Tatchell, London SE1

In his article on 'Non-nuclear Europe' (*NS* 20 January) Stan Windass argues for Britain to shift its military strategy to an 'unambiguously defensive posture'. The arguments for an alternative, non-nuclear, non-belligerent defence startegy need to be taken seriously by the Labour Party and CND – given the electorate's regrettable, but repeated rejection of unilateralism.

Put simply: a substantial majority of the British public do not support nuclear disarmament basically because they fear that our country would be vulnerable to attack from potential aggressors – real or imagined, present or future. If the peace movement and the Left can offer a plausible alternative to the Bomb, we may be able to allay these anxieties and eventually win majority support for unilateralism. What is particularly encouraging about the Windass article is the way he begins to open out the disarmament debate beyond the rigid terrain of unilateralism versus multilateralism.

Both Labour and CND ought to be moving in a similar direction. Instead of restricting our critique to Britain's nuclear arsenal, we should be questioning and challenging Britain's *whole* defence strategy. Despite the decline of empire, the British army remains predominantly oriented to foreign objectives (in Ireland, in the Falklands/Malvinas, to NATO-support in Germany) rather than to the self-defence of Britain. As a result, the weapon systems in our armoury, both nuclear and conventional, are extremely ill-suited for the purposes of strict defence. They are largely offensive hardware such as ICBMs, aircraft carriers, long-range strategic bombers, hunter-killer submarines and armoured tank divisions.

Ready-made examples of strictly defensive systems can be found in the Swiss, Swedish and Yugoslav models of 'in depth' territorial defence, based on radically democratised and civilianised armed forces.

Gays on the run?

Richard Allen, London N1

Jogging is not such a new crime as Mark Urbanowicz's report (*NS* 20 January) of the police assaults on Richard Guy suggests. The more ambitious police officer has, in recent years, had available an improving book entitled *The Signs of Crime – A Field Manual for Police* (published by McGraw-Hill) by David Powis, a senior police officer.

In their search for evidence of criminal intent David Powis encourages police officers to 'watch for the athlete dressed in a track suit running about residential streets either at dusk or in the early morning. While one must not become morbidly suspicious, experience does indicate that there seems to be a correlation between such persons and homosexual nuisances.'

Much maligned

A. R. Jones, Assistant Director 13+, Bradford Metropolitan Council Directorate of Educational Services, Bradford

I write in response to the article 'Schools of Racism' (*NS* 13 January). In it my upper school head teacher colleagues are maligned throughout. The report contains no single reference to any of the positive or successful strategies which schools have developed and are developing. The whole tenor of the article is of a degree of professional irresponsibility which is unwarranted, damaging to morale, and sickening to teachers who are trying to improve the situation. The article can only serve to heighten the anxiety of those parents who read it.

The resolution of the NAHT★ meeting which is mentioned did, in fact, affirm 'support for the aims and spirit of the recent Local Administrative Memorandum on Racial Behaviour'. It went on to say that 'considerable concern was expressed about the way in which it was presented'. Subsequent events might be held to give some substance to that concern. Some part of it has to do with the vexed civil rights question of holding names in central files, and of the use which is to be made of information so collated, and by whom. (The Hanson incident which Mr Harrison appears to have got hold of is a case in point. It was, arguably, not racist at all.)

The question is one of form and not of essence. The resolution went on to express a preference for not implementing 'the LAM in all its detail', until a working group set up by the association had had an opportunity to deal with precisely these things in a proposed revision. The impression given by your article in no way reflects the informed consideration given to matters which remain outstanding problems. They will remain so if people choose not to see them for what they are, but leap instead into the sort of confrontational postures which deny any moral integrity to others, as Mr Harrison appears to have done.

★ National Association of Head Teachers

Left out

Mark Hollingsworth, London N16

After five months of extensive research for a book on the Labour Movement and the press, I have yet to find any evidence whatsoever to suggest that 'Benn uses the same media – and his well publicised attacks on it – with great skill as a sounding board for his political campaigns and ideas' (*NS* 20 January).

Indeed, the overriding characteristic of press coverage of Tony Benn has been the suppression of his ideas, their replacement by extraordinary character assassination, and thereby the destruction of any possibility of genuine political debate.

Mr Benn has been described as a 'megalomaniac' (*Daily Telegraph*), 'intellectual idiot' (*Daily Mirror*), 'dictator' and 'Fuehrer Benn' (*Daily Express*), 'demon mugger' (*Daily Mail*) and 'Commissar of an Iron Curtain Britain' (*Sunday Express*). These insults are not based on personal hostility but as a way of setting the political agenda.

Your editorial is thus quite misguided and inaccurate. Benn cannot use the media because the forum for debate is already fixed.

Sodomite, schmodomite

Nicolas Walter, London N1

Alan Brien (*NS* 6 January) says that in Richard Pine's book on *Oscar Wilde* 'Queensbury's card to Wilde is printed correctly for the first time as "posing sodomite" with the "as a" omitted'. To begin with, the name of Wilde's persecutor was, of course, Queensberry. Then, in the card which led to his prosecution for criminal libel, he misspelt the last word as 'somdomite' (*sic*). Finally, the rest of its wording isn't as straightforward as Brien suggests.

The generally accepted version is, indeed, 'For Oscar Wilde, posing as a somdomite'. But, in the indictment of Queensberry, it is given as 'For Oscar Wilde posing as somdomite'; this was presumably agreed between the two sides and was not challenged by the defence, and this is what appears in H. Montgomery Hyde's account of *The Trials of Oscar Wilde* (1948) and biography of *Oscar Wilde* (1976). But in the latter book the actual card is reproduced, and we may see why the porter at the Albermarle Club said that he 'did not understand it' and why there has been confusion ever since. At least one word is so illegible that we cannot even be sure it says 'posing'. The porter originally thought that it said 'ponce'.

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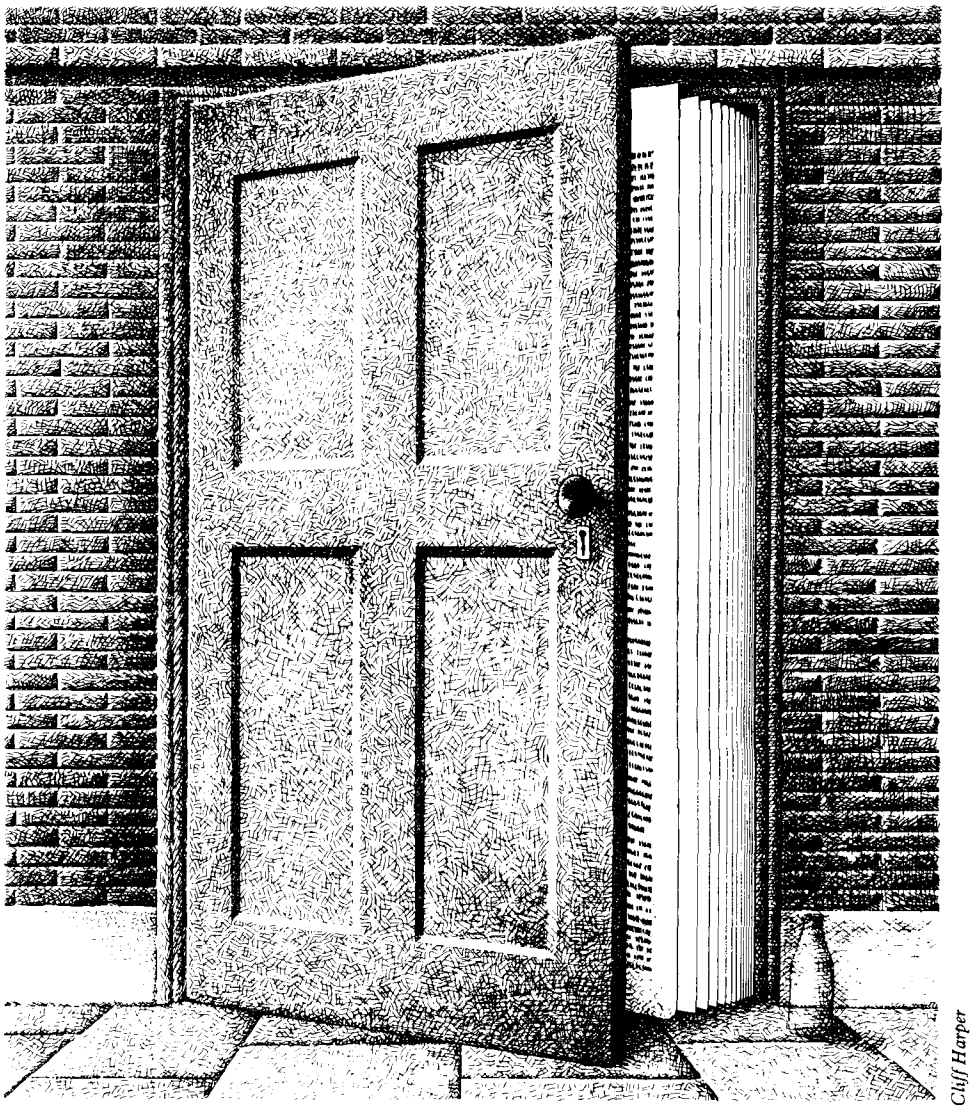
Terry Eagleton

Stepping out

Writing in Society
RAYMOND WILLIAMS *Verso* £18.50 & £5.95
Dockers and Detectives
KEN WORPOLE *Verso* £14 & £3.95
Society and Literature 1945-1970
ed. ALAN SINFIELD *Methuen* £11.50 & £5.95



Cliff Harper

Raymond Williams retired last year from the Chair of Drama at Cambridge, thus ending an association with the university which had begun when he came up as a working-class student from rural Wales in 1939. His two valedictory lectures as professor of drama, reprinted in this valuable collection of essays, were remarkable for two doubtless related reasons: the implacable distance which Williams has now set between himself and orthodox 'Eng.Lit.', and the almost total absence from the lecture hall of senior members of the Cambridge English Faculty. Professor or not, Williams became over the the years more and more difficult to incorporate; the reasonable, liberally persuasive tones of *Culture and Society*, the book which took him to a Cambridge fellowship in 1961, contrast sharply with the steely, sardonic, bitterly realistic quality of his current writing.

For several years now Williams has rejected the title of 'literary critic', turning from that socially bankrupt definition to what he calls 'cultural materialism'. In its slow evolution towards this position – defined by Williams as 'an analysis of all forms of signification within the actual means and conditions of their production' – his work has boldly transgressed the well-policed frontiers between different academic disciplines. None of the conventional labels – sociologist, political theorist, social philosopher, cultural commentator – fits his writing exhaustively or exactly. If Williams has a 'field', then as he once wryly remarked in conversation it probably belongs to the days before the Enclosure Acts. The point of a field is to keep others out; the so-called Cambridge structuralist affair was less about 'critical approaches' than about protecting the literary canon from those armed with film projectors and volumes of popular fiction. It wasn't perhaps surprising that the Cambridge debate blew up in Thatcher's Britain: in the depths of social crisis, Literature appeared the one true repository of timeless value for those who had long since ceased to believe in much else, and if the materialists and semioticians were allowed to get their grubby hands even on *that* then the game was well and truly up. In fact, as Williams shrewdly argues in this book, much Marxist and structuralist criticism has been perfectly compatible with the ruling orthodoxy of examining isolated literary texts; what really threatens the self-appointed guardians of the canon is a radical remapping of the boundaries of the entire 'discipline', which was never much of a discipline in the first place. To the thought police who insist that 'our task is to teach the canon' (Christopher Ricks), Williams riposts that the literary canon is just as variable and debatable as anything else.

Some of the essays in this volume – a couple of curiously academicist pieces on dramatic monologue, an excessively respectful tribute to David Hume – are hardly examples of cultural materialism in action. Other contributions – on English prose, William Godwin, Victorian fiction – display Williams at his most historically sensitive and intellectually powerful, grasping the social relations of an age in the stylistic detail of a literary text. Who else but Williams, for example, would point out (in an essay on region and class in the novel) that whereas fiction written in Dorset is 'regional', novels produced in the so-called Home Counties are not? In an illuminating piece on Robert Tressell's *Ragged-Arsed Philanthropists* (Williams gives the work its proper title), he points out the oddness of the novel's emerging from Hastings – not a traditional working-class community – and the complex effects of this on its subject-matter.

All this, as they would say in the Cambridge English Faculty, is of course 'sociology' rather than 'eternal values'; and the same grim stricture would no doubt be levelled against Ken Worpole's **Dockers and Detectives**, a timely collection of essays on popular and working-class fiction. Curiously insensitive to the call of the literary canon, Worpole writes on Dashiell Hammett and detective fiction, second world war escape stories and the literature of the Jewish East End. As an activist in the Worker Writers Federation, that much unsung movement of 20-odd nationwide groups producing writing the Arts Council refuses to regard as Literature, Worpole knows what people actually read rather than what they ought to, and skilfully explores

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the rules and ideological assumptions of those vastly influential genres cast by Cambridge into the outer darkness. He has unearthed a fascinating trio of 1930s Liverpool-Irish expressionist novelists, all three of them seamen, none of them, regrettably, Literature.

The publishing industry hasn't been slow to leap on the Literature and Society bandwagon, and the Left no doubt shouldn't look a gifthorse in the mouth. Methuen's 'Context of English Literature' series is another straw in the wind tugging literary studies in Britain away from the isolated text towards a sense of surrounding history. There's a packaged feel about this latest offering, **Society and Literature 1945-1970,** which, in trying to cope with politics, religion, sexuality, theatre and publishing, tends at times to fragment into brief notes on too many authors; but Stuart Laing's chapter on the book trade is excellently researched and informative, and the book valuably demystifies the notion that history is mere 'background' to an autonomous literature.

Taken together, these three books testify to something of an historic shift in contemporary criticism: the fact that for the first time since the 1930s the most resourceful, intellectually stimulating criticism is now coming from the Left. Most of those who got their jobs in literature departments in the 1960s have remained sublimely untainted by much of what has happened in their field since: the rapid growth of cultural studies, the advent of structuralism and semiotics, the resurgence of Marxist literary theory, the arrival of feminist criticism. But these heady developments have bred a whole new generation of literature teachers, for whom 'English' provides a convenient space for the study of symbolic practices of all kinds. In a familiar deadlock, the Left has the ideas and the Right has the power. If the Left has the ideas it does, it is in no small part due to the work of Raymond Williams, whose astonishingly prolific output – some 20 books in 30 years, many of stunning originality – has transformed the whole terrain of 'Eng Lit.' in Britain. From the relative serenity of his retirement, he may take comfort from the thought that the battle against the high priests of the canon, the pedlars of eternal values and deriders of popular culture, is not only continuing but intensifying. □

Among this week's contributors:

TERRY EAGLETON teaches English at Wadham College, Oxford. His books include *Criticism and Ideology* and, most recently, *The Rape of Clarissa*.

ANN SHEARER works on the *Guardian*'s 'Society Tomorrow' section and is the author of *Disability: Whose Handicap?*

NAOMI MITCHISON's writing career, which began with the publication of her novel *The Conquered* in 1923, has embraced fiction, drama, poetry, writing for children, travel and other non-fiction. Among her more recent books is *Mucking Around: Five Continents over Fifty Years* (1981).

HISTORY
Christopher Hill

Good walkers

The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries
CARLO GINZBURG trs. JOHN and ANNE TEDESCHI *Routledge* £9.95

Carlo Ginzburg's marvellous book *The Cheese and the Worms* (1976) appeared in English translation in 1980; the present volume translates a work originally published in 1966. *The Cheese and the Worms* painstakingly reconstructed the ideas of a late-16th-century miller in the Friuli, on the basis of very full records of his trial by the Inquisition; and through him tried to recapture the highly unorthodox ideas and assumptions of the peasant culture of this isolated and mountainous region of the Venetian republic. *The Night Battles* is a more difficult book. There is no single hero, but the theme is similar. Ginzburg tries, by putting together evidence from innumerable trials, to reconstruct an otherwise unrecorded body of peasant ideas which seemed almost as alien to the inquisitors as they do to us. Again the scene is the Friuli, meeting point of Slav, German and Italian customs. The inquisitors spoke Italian, a different language from their victims.

The cases concern those who were called *benandanti*, which means 'good walkers', 'those who go well', 'good-doers'. Benandanti were drawn from those born with a caul. 'On certain nights of the year' they 'fell into a trance or deep sleep while their souls . . . left their bodies so that they could do . . . battle, armed with stalks of fennel, against analogous companies of male witches' (armed equally inadequately with stalks of sorghum) to decide 'the fate of the season's crops. They also performed cures and other forms of benevolent magic'; they identified witches. (I quote from Eric Hobsbawm's lucid and helpful foreword.)

Ginzburg rightly wastes little time asking whether the benandanti 'really' did these things, or dreamed them. They believed that they did them, and – more important – so did their fellow-villagers. In a number of trials the accused, with minor variants, told similar stories; and these stories were confirmed by their relations and friends. Clearly very different assumptions are involved here from those to which we are accustomed.

When the benandanti came to the attention of the Inquisition in the 1570s they caused considerable perplexity. The inquisitors tried to fit them into their preconceived framework of ideas. They decided that benandanti must be some sort of witches, despite the stubborn insistence of all benandanti examined that they were fighting for true religion *against* witches as well as to preserve the crops. Ginzburg is concerned to show the interaction of popular ideas about the benandanti with the inquisitors' assumption, drawn from books, that witches went to sabbats and indulged in orgies. He argues that the benandanti's role was a survival from fertility rituals once widespread throughout Europe. They went forth 'on Thursday nights in the Ember seasons: festivities which had survived from an ancient agricultural cycle and which were eventually incorporated in the Christian calendar, that symbolized the changes of the seasons, the perilous passage from the old to the new time of year, with its promise of planting, harvest, reaping and autumn vintage'. He gives many parallel instances from as far afield as Bavaria and Livonia.

But there were also benandanti (mostly female) whose souls during the Ember Days left their bodies to join the nocturnal processions of the dead. The caul which identified the benandante was considered to be the seat of the 'outer soul' in several European and even non-European popular traditions. To be born with it linked the benandante to 'the world of the wandering souls, of the prematurely deceased'. Ginzburg agrees that 'it is difficult for us to conceive' that a tradition of this kind could survive for centuries although 'taking the form of a rigid, irresistible internal impulse'; and equally difficult to comprehend 'the subjective consistency of these "dreams", of these "fantasizings".' This mysterious world of mythology was incomprehensible to the inquisitors and they were in no hurry to persecute.

But gradually they assimilated the unknown to the known, the benandanti to the witches against whom they dreamed they fought. Benandanti claimed to be healers who broke the spells of witches. They knew who in their villages were witches, and either denounced them or made money by frustrating them. From the point of view of country priests benandanti were troublemakers, worse than witches themselves. Ultimately benandanti had 'either to admit that they were witches and participated in the sabbat, or to acknowledge that their nocturnal meetings were pure fantasies, and their accusations of witches mere expedients to squeeze out a little money and to spread dissension'.

After 50 years of skilful questioning from inquisitors better trained in logic then they were, the benandanti themselves came to admit the ultimate crime of participating in the witches' sabbat. And this view spread to their public. Popular beliefs came to confirm the fantasies which the educated had learned from their books. Fortunately the witch-mania was by this date beginning to succumb to general scepticism.

Carlo Ginzburg's argument is too complex to summarise satisfactorily; and some of his conclusions are tentative. But he paints a fascinating picture of a group of primitive men and women living within the bounds of Italy's greatest commercial republic. Their beliefs had presumably survived there for millennia, overlaid with only the thinnest veneer of Christianity. What was new was

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the interest suddenly taken in them by the Inquisition of the Counter-Reformation church. In protestant and catholic countries alike, as we are just beginning to realise, the 16th century saw the first serious effort to Christianise the whole population of Europe. This led to persecution of witches, to enforcement of monogamous marriage, to attacks on traditional village sports which English Puritans rightly saw as pagan survivals – a drive, in fact, to root out a whole traditional peasant culture.

Ginzburg's book is primarily for specialist historians, but it is worth wrestling with. It gives us a fascinating glimpse of the gap between popular culture and that of the educated upper classes. In the 1570s inquisitors did not know what benandanti were; nor did a 'magnifica domina' of Valvasone in 1600. In 1621 a rich citizen of Udine beat up a shepherd to convince him that there were no such things as benandanti: only witches. His ideas were more modern; but was he more rational? Ginzburg's careful and unpatronising unveiling of this peasant culture joins the work of Le Roy Ladurie, Keith Thomas, Peter Burke and Natalie Davis, who are beginning the enormous task of reconstituting the beliefs of the illiterate and inarticulate; and of Frances Yates, Walter Pagel, Charles Webster and Wayne Shumaker, who have demonstrated the contribution of magic to modern science. 'The age of faith' is beginning to look very different now we appreciate the cultural gap between intellectuals and the mass of the population; so do those catch-alls, Reformation, Counter-Reformation, the scientific revolution and 'modernisation'. Ginzburg shows how much rethinking we need to do. The old notion that ideas percolate downwards from the educated to the uneducated hardly seems borne out by this book. Perhaps there was a two-way exchange between upper-class and popular culture? The book is excellently translated and reasonably priced. □

FICTION
Richard Deveson

Doubts

Memoirs of An Anti-Semite
GREGOR VON REZZORI *Picador* £7.95 & £2.50
The Sandman
MILES GIBSON *Heinemann* £7.95
Painting Water
TERESA WAUGH *Hamish Hamilton* £8.95

At night, the place was 'a handful of lights scattered over a flat-topped hill at the bend of a river, tied to the world solely by the railroad tracks, which glistened in the goat's milk of the moonlight'. During the day, 'it consisted of a rustic depot and a few zigzagging streets trodden into the loam and lined with plain houses . . . thistles and scrubby camomile ran riot along the verge of open ditches . . .' This is a god-forsaken small town in the Bukovina in the 1920s, formerly part of Imperial Austria, then of Romania, now of the USSR. Similar pungent descriptions, of seedy streets and shops and lodging-houses in pre-war Bucharest, of raffish members of the Romanian *demi-monde* and of moods of vacant adolescent wistfulness, are the strong point of Gregor von Rezzori's five stories, **Memoirs of an Anti-Semite.** These places and people and feelings are lost: lost in historical time; lost in political space; lost, too, as personal experiences for the 'I' telling the stories, who nevertheless reclaims them vividly, in their dust and light, their dead flies, mournful poplars and Macedonian cigarettes.

Yet the stories also provoke two big questions, which they fail to resolve. They are fictional in method, but they read as autobiography: autobiography retouched, perhaps, but not much. One is driven to speculate which of the two they are, since, with autobiography, the problem of trust in the author unavoidably presents itself. Was the author a reliable judge of the events he lived through? Is he a reliable reporter, now, of the judgments he made then? Why hasn't he done more to fill the obvious big gap in his narrative, the years between the Austrian *Anschluss* and 1945? Why doesn't he say more about the political innocence which let him be friendly with Nazis within the Fascist Austrian *Heimwehr*, who pop up again, in 1938, in the SS?

The second question is connected to the first. The narrator, the son of hard-up ex-

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Austrian gentry, is no hysterical anti-Semite; indeed, the stories all describe episodes in which he entangles himself with Jews, in envious teenage friendship or in varieties of love and marriage. His anti-Semitism seems to be largely a matter of ignorance and snobbery. Yet, as he describes himself, he is inordinately obsessed by Jews. And he never gets to grips with why this should be, nor does he seem really aware that this obsession is something that needs to be explained. As with his historical judgment, the trouble appears to be a combination of naivety and a lack of self-understanding. He is strangely incurious.

'The past is always fairyland,' he says at one point, modishly playing off 'truth' against 'invention'. In context, this sounds evasive. More truth and less invention would have been better – and would surely, since he writes so well, have been possible.

Miles Gibson's first novel, **The Sandman**, is not, one assumes, autobiographical, since the 'I' who relates the greater part of it goes round sticking sharp knives into people's necks, twisting the blades upwards into their brains and admiring the 'chrysanthemum of blood' that blossoms from their ears. Sometimes he drinks the 'petals'. He regards himself as a superior person, an artist of death, but 'the vampire dwells in every man' and, in any case, 'every day a hundred children die in Africa from starvation, a hundred more choke to death on their milkshakes in the USA . . .' In the midst of life, etc.

This novel is hard to assess. The ethical idea that gruesome murder is much of a muchness with other kinds of death won't bear examination and is anyway only the self-justification of someone who has, shall we say, an axe to grind. If the book is to be seen as a pathological case study, then this murderer sounds rather too sane, too perky, too cool. There are certainly people who outwardly resemble him – who kill as he kills while otherwise living unexceptional, if secretive lives – but is this quite what it's like inside their heads? Shouldn't there be more chaos, suffering and loss of control? Still, Miles Gibson writes fluently and very imaginatively and enjoys wielding his own sharp verbal knife.

Teresa Waugh's **Painting Water** is also a first novel, but there the resemblance ends. It is an attempt to make ordinariness interesting and, in this, succeeds. Its central figure is Alice, the daughter of a martinet head of a dreadful little prep school and of a mother who's slowly losing her hold on sanity. In a series of short chapters running from 1944 to 1982, Alice is rescued by her marriage to Dick, a decent, dullish estate agent and fanatical gardener; has children who (convincingly) grow up into kinds of adults scarcely foreseen by their parents; dies of cancer, wondering for the first time whether her life has been boring and whether it has all been an exercise in avoiding boredom. She thinks she's glad she's always been too busy to wonder whether existence has a purpose: 'I like making jam.' Perhaps we're actually given too much jam making in the book (for jam, read also fish pies, strawberries from the freezer and a lot of other exact, but not always exciting, life-support detail), but Alice's last questions make an unsentimental and moving end to the novel and could hardly, after all, be more important. □

CITYLIMITS
THIS WEEK

'Life ruined my drugs'

Special report on cannabis and cops, junkies and judges.
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HISTORY OF IDEAS
Ann Shearer

Crying aloud

The Religion of the Machine Age
DORA RUSSELL *Routledge* £12.95
The Dora Russell Reader
Pandora £3.95

What seized the young Dora Russell on those first visits to Russia and America was not the conflict between capitalism and communism, which seemed a mere scrap between rival sects in the service of industrialism, but the terrible power of the industrial machine to crush the human heart. Her passionate urging then was for Russia to assert its soul, 'splendidly heretical to Marx' in its warmth and emotionalism, and unite it with America's industrial body to create a world in which the machine became servant rather than master, harnessed for individual liberation rather than glorified to crush human beings into cogs for its wheels.

If her young insights made little sense to those around her then, we have hardly the same excuse 60 years on, when the machine religion threatens us all with obliteration as our final sacrifice to its demands. That the thread of her now completed argument remains so utterly consistent with that first chapter written in 1921 is itself an extraordinary testament to the tireless concerns of her life – splendidly affirmed in Pandora's companion collection of her journalism over 57 years. That her passionate hope that ordinary men and women will at last learn to reject the 'isms' in the service of individual liberty and love remains undimmed is a gift for which we should surely be grateful, and given for us all to use.

That her testament comes in the form of a highly quirky history of the development of male consciousness from Babylonian beginnings to current confusions brings its problems as well as its delights. This brisk dispatching, through just 250 pages, of all of man's philosophies and strivings, this sharp pointing out of turnings missed and errors made, risks at times becoming something of a simplistic catalogue of Good and mostly Bad Things. Such clarity and consistency of view bring a narrowing too. No room in this determined tracing of the 'biological thesis', this no-nonsense rejection of the spiritual, for any notion that the human creature may after all be more complex than the sum of body and mind. No room either for any notion that, if the male split between those two were healed, humankind would still have its dark and destructive side to deal with.

Yet it surely can't be doubted that disastrous is what the mind-body split has been to man's philosophy and actions, as his pursuit of the ideal has taken him and so all of us further and further from the reality of our human condition, from relatedness to each other and to our earth, as the quest for a perfection out there has led to a betrayal of the good-enough back here. Could women, would women, have produced the Platonic identification of perfection with a reality that existed only outside the senses, or the subsequent confusions of the infinity of mathematics with the eternity of mysticism? Could Church Mothers ever have so hatefully, horribly glorified the flight from the reality of the body and so turned askew a philosophy of how the human species could live together in tolerable peace on earth?

That the impetus for male dominance of the whole natural world came directly from the Church's teaching because monks had no other outlet for their sexual feelings, intellectual freedom forbidden, than the invention of machines, is a perhaps unexpected link in the chain. But in man's insistence on both a perfection out there and his intellect as all that truly mattered is the subsequent seed of first God the Clockwinder and then the clock itself as god.

That we should understand just how we got into today's appalling mess and set out to repair it before our time runs out is Dora Russell's urgent aim. 'Philosophy and sex are more important in politics than general elections', she said in 1925 (thanks to Pandora, we have the splendid 'Hypatia' in its entirety). And so she says today. For her, it remains sex that has led man to his philosophies and thence his politics. The origins of

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all our ills lie in man's sexuality – in his flight from the earthing consequences of sex, from the responsibility of nurturing, from all that woman represents. Look no further than the profound and inescapable conflict in man that that flight sets up for the seeds of his violences, divisivenesses and need to dominate, and so the consequences that women and children, as well as men, have had to bear.

And then start, at last, to assert in the place of those the only source of cooperation – the human heart. 'I am convinced that it is the voice of women, proclaiming what their heart says, crying aloud in defence of life on earth, that is the one last hope of our deliverance.' For Dora Russell now, as always, the path must lie through the education of man's feelings, through nurturing in him the instinct for family, for children, and through his discovery of the kinship between human kind and the rest of nature, of the intelligence applied in the necessities of daily living, of the grace and harmony in friendships and social relations that women have always known.

> What I am saying, with all earnestness, is that the heart of the problem between individuals and society as a whole is that civilisation is not built upon motor cars, washing machines or nuclear power, but upon the creative drive of two sexes, men and women, who have never yet learned fully to understand, to love one another and act together in harmony.

The call for understanding is not just to men. The insistence, now as always, that women who seek to minimise biological differences and reject rather than share their traditional roles are simply conniving with man-the-philosopher still poses its challenge. What, as Dora Russell points out, could be more terrifyingly absurd than a confusion between sexual equality and sexual identity that argues that women should have their equal place in the armed forces when what we should be saying is that the pursuit of war should cease to be a career for men? □

AUTOBIOGRAPHY
Naomi Mitchison

Eye-opener

Journey from the North
STORM JAMESON
Virago Vol 1 £5.50 & Vol 2 £4.95

Really good autobiography is as rare as it is exciting. When it comes as hard-hitting as *Journey from the North* and covers a period from the Nineties of last century to the Sixties of this, you may guess that it is required reading from which you will come back a wiser and perhaps angrier person. It wasn't easy to be an intelligent, hard-tempered girl from a small Yorkshire town (beautiful though parts of Whitby might still be) 80 years ago. Storm fell into every kind of trap, family, religion, money, love and hate, but always she struggled out, battered but by no means bowed and usually clinging to the half-finished manuscript of a book which she was passionately going to write. Not this book, which had to wait for a much later time after she had already written an astonishing number of novels and short stories, some very good, and our admirable Virago is gradually re-publishing them. But none of them are as stunning as this on her own self and her own time.

I re-read my old copy some two years ago and now I am reading it all again. Few books stand up to this. Now, through my reading, I feel the creep of guilt for the years just before the last war, remembering Lilo Linke and her friends escaping out of the grip of the Nazis and finding so little help from us, never given with both hands because, I must suppose, other people's terror and unhappiness is so boring, while our own, admittedly much smaller set-backs feel so much more important. Bad enough then, but are we today so scared from staring at the only too likely end of life on our planet that we can't any longer notice individual injustices and pain? Are we so used to cruelty that it passes us by? In the Thirties political torture was still unusual, still shocking. Storm reacted to it and also watched the faces of politicians and publishers and ambassadors; also, of course, those of her fellow writers.

New Statesman readers should look specially at some of the portraits, not only the baddies but the others, at Kingsley Martin, at Nye, at poor old Snowden, at Nevinson and Edward Thompson. How many remember? But if you do, read this book, especially after the war, the terrible chapters on what was left over, particularly in Prague. What should we think? Whom can we forgive? Is forgiveness useful, does any good come of it? About the only horror Storm didn't see was a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp.

Her own life took such blows as would have shattered a lesser person. But she had a job to do. She was the 1939 President of British PEN. For a time that body came alive, organising help, saving more than a few from the Nazis. She worked like a Yorkshire terrier at this, angry, exhausted – how clearly this comes out in the book! Between times she took the way out of writing one of her novels – a much better refuge than any love affair, as some of us old professionals know.

I wonder, looking back on the war years, if it would not have been a good idea to murder Hitler before that autumn of 1939. Storm, given half a chance, might have done it. But perhaps assassination doesn't work; the devil has already done its job on the believers. All sorts of questions come up in the mind of the reader. I only wish I could ever have written such a brave and honest and totally gripping book. □

Matthew Sweeney

Kipper

A kipper is red and salty as you know.
It's one thing not relished much in France
not being suited to wines from Bordeaux.

Nor would its chopped flesh enhance
a salad of lettuce, beansprouts and avocado –
its flavour overpowers like a lance.

They like its herring-days of long ago,
its leaping flash visible at a glance
as nets are lowered over the trawler's bow.

To be caught alive and used for finance
is bad enough; to be eaten is a blow;
but to be split, smoked and dyed this
war-dance
red whose only active purpose is show
is typical of cuisines outside France,
is evidence of much they'll never know.

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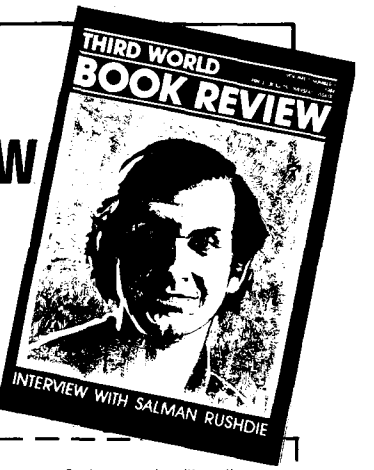

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I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings
MAYA ANGELOU *Virago* £3.95

At the age of eight she was raped by her mother's boyfriend. At 16, she gave birth to a son whose father she scarcely knew. Even without these two shocks, Maya Angelou's autobiography would be remarkable: devoid of bitterness; pungent; funny; with that rare gift for hope in adversity hinted at by the title.

A singer, dancer and black activist – a household name in the United States – Maya Angelou grew up in the Arkansas and California of the '30s. It is these years that are covered by this first volume of her autobiography. Three subsequent volumes tell of working with Martin Luther King, editing *African Review* and acting in *Roots*, but here Maya is a reasonably well-off black girl, discovering, with slow pain, that the white people's world is not open to her. Even a white dentist, happy to borrow money from her family when he needs it, refuses to treat her throbbing tooth – 'My policy is I'd rather stick my hand in a dog's mouth than a nigger's.'

Maya brings irresistibly alive the *dramatis personae* of her early years in Stamps, Arkansas – her adored brother; lame Uncle Willie; Mrs Flowers, the town's black aristocrat, with her voile dresses and skin like a black peeled plum. It was she who inspired Maya's love of literature: of Shakespeare (even though he was white) and of women in English novels who drink tea and walk across the moors ('whatever they were'). Indeed, Maya shares with Jane Austen a sharp eye for the world she knows. We only glimpse the Depression, or the coming of World War II. More important is her grandmother's store smelling of Vienna sausage and pickles; her own mute terror when Mr Freeman rapes her.

With the support of her fierce, Gospel-singing grandmother and, later, her own mother, Maya not only recovers her sense of sexual self respect, but, by the end of this volume, is fighting the white authorities to become the first black ever to work on the San Francisco streetcars. It is astonishing that this country has had to wait so long to read her.

Fiona Maddocks

Three Literary Friendships
JOHN LEHMANN *Quartet* £8.95

Close friendships between poets have generally been productive affairs. John Lehmann, influential editor of *New Writing* (1936-50) and once general manager of the Hogarth Press, has always been 'deeply fascinated' by such associations and has chosen to write about three examples that he finds 'of the first importance in European poetry since the Romantic Revival'. He thus couples Byron with Shelley, Verlaine with Rimbaud and Robert Frost with Edward Thomas.

In each instance, as Lehmann observes, there was – both chronologically and creatively – a senior and junior partner in the literary firm. When Byron and Shelley got together, the author of *Childe Harold* was an international celebrity whereas the poet of *Queen Mab* was known, only by the critical few, as an aristocratic oddity. Verlaine was a published poet when, in 1871, he welcomed the teenage prodigy Rimbaud to Paris. Robert Frost met his literary partner after Edward Thomas had admiringly reviewed *A Boy's Will* (1913) in the *New Weekly*.

Lehmann draws no simple moral from his study which, after all, covers a spell of Byronic hero-worship, a homosexual liaison in France and an Anglo-American understanding. The most illuminating friendship examined in the book is probably that between Frost and Thomas, since Thomas might never have broken into poetry without the encouragement of the American. Shelley and Rimbaud had few doubts that they were born poets, but Thomas first woke up to the possibilities of a conversationally fluid line by studying Frost's poems and, initially at least, emulating them. For his part, Frost was characteristically modest in assessing his influence on Thomas: 'I referred him to paragraphs in his book *In Pursuit of Spring* and told him to write it in verse form in exactly the same cadence. That's all there was to it.' It was the right advice at the right time and the result was a lucid verse devoid of unnecessary ornament.

As the reader would expect from a writer as experienced as Lehmann, the book is skilfully arranged and full of anecdotal details as well as literary insights. It is written in a popular style that still gives full scope to the complexity of the personalities involved. If poets are frequently their own worst enemies, Lehmann implies, it is as well that they can occasionally make peace with one another.

Alan Bold

Runcie: The Making of an Archbishop
MARGARET DUGGAN *Hodder* £9.95

Asked at the time of the last royal wedding what he had privately said to the bride and groom, Archbishop Robert Runcie told the press that the question left him poised 'between cliché and indiscretion'. Similarly poised, the author of this biography generally chooses cliché. Just as Mrs Duggan judges that the young Runcie was 'a thoroughly normal adolescent boy', so she observes that the mature primate remains 'a deeply pastoral bishop and an affectionate human being'. She reveals the unsurprising fact that on his appointment as archbishop it became clear that he had given a lot of thought to his new job.

Her caution is a pity. Margaret Duggan was given unusual opportunities to talk with the archbishop, but her blandness obscures his remarkable toughness, a toughness sometimes assailed on both sides at once. Thus Runcie's willingness to ordain openly gay priests offends the conservatives in the church. At the same time he upset many homosexuals by describing them charitably as handicapped rather than sinful or sick. ('Maybe not as fertile, but often just as fruitful', responded the Revd Jim Cotter in *Gay News*.) Margaret Duggan's biography is an amiable read, well illustrated, but in no way a critical assessment of a church leader at a crucial moment in the history of Britain and the English church.

James Bentley

The Legend of Red Clydeside
IAIN MCLEAN *John Donald* £18

The last decade has witnessed quite a fad for debunking heroes and legends of the Labour Movement. 'Is nothing sacred?' one is forced to ask, at the arrival of this latest in the line – in which 'Iain McLean argues that Red Clydeside was myth'. *Et tu*, Red Clyde?

Although the book is well researched, there is much to be questioned in its methodology; omitted are one and a half centuries of pre-1914 revolutionary tradition, while the rest is analysed in classical 'Aunt Sally' style. It is clear that the author's image of just how 'red' the Clyde was supposed to be is rather exaggerated. Much of the book is spent demolishing myths of myths.

In a way, it is reminiscent of the later struggles of the 1970s, when Upper Clyde Shipyard brought into being the first workers' occupations; brought overt Communist orators on to mass-rally rostrums; brought certain starry-eyed groups to see a successful version of a French May emerging from the Clyde. That the stars in the eyes soon faded could not lessen the *real* militancy of those days, could not de-politicise the people who had come to politics because of those struggles.

It is *that* Clyde that this book is about: the mass pickets; the rolling strike; the streets jammed with strikers; the passionate oratory; suppression of the movement by the Home Office; baton charges; mounted police; the arrest of the reds; shadowy intelligence agents; the movement of regiments thought to be 'safe'; accusations of imminent Bolshevik uprisings; tanks coming on to the street. Of such things, legends are made – but the author moves too easily to suggest that 'legend' is synonymous with 'gross exaggeration'.

Contrary to its intention, the book leaves the heroes of the Red Clyde standing. Stripped of the fog of time, their value can be assessed anew. Had the book emerged in the radical '60s, those Clydebank pioneers might well have seemed dim; set against the Tory '80s, their vision stimulates again. McLean might not appreciate it, but I believe that his book puts several more stones on the monument that he sought to reduce to size.

David Douglass

More Law Reform Now
ed. PETER ARCHER, QC MP, and ANDREW MARTIN, QC
Barry Rose £12 & £7.50

The appearance of this book was commented upon by Geoffrey Bindman (*NS* 7 October). It is an updated version of *Law Reform Now* published in 1963 under the auspices of the Society of Labour Lawyers. In his Introduction, Lord Gardiner expresses the hope and belief that the Mark Two will prove as useful 'to *any* Government . . . which may share our general approach' as did its predecessor to the 1964 Labour Government. With this ominous remark the ex-Lord Chancellor perhaps unwittingly puts his finger on a fundamental defect of the new book.

It is horribly uneven; Bindman's own contribution – on discrimination law – stands out from most of its fellows. But even he makes a surprising omission: he makes no mention of the pressure from the gay community to make the sex discrimination laws applicable to less favourable treatment on grounds of sexual *orientation*.

The longest article runs to some 36 pages, the shortest to a mere ten. Paradoxically, the latter is Andrew Martin's 'Machinery of Law Reform'. Joe Jacob's piece on legal education is almost exclusively descriptive: I could find only one concrete proposal for reform. It may be that the defects in legal training – especially for the Bar – speak for themselves. But this is not to say that there is no need for some constructive thought on the subject. For example longer pupillages for trainee barristers would bring the Bar into line with the solicitors' profession, formalise the position in fact, and perhaps give the already saturated Bar a chance to catch its breath.

It is to be hoped that this collection will be only the first step towards the development of a serious socialist programme of law reform. It is a truism that the legal system is largely impervious to pressure for change and that there are few easy answers to existing problems. *More Law Reform Now*, regrettably, doesn't even begin to ask the right questions.

Mark Benney

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FILMS
John Coleman

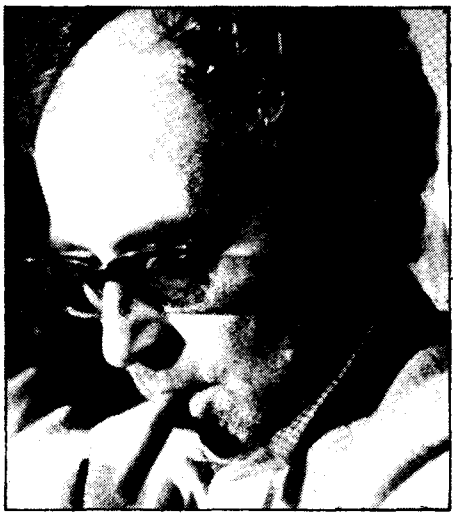
False dawn

First Name Carmen (18)
Camden Plaza; Chelsea Cinema
Can She Bake a Cherry Pie? (15)
ICA; Classic, Tottenham Court Road
When the Mountains Tremble
Rio, Dalston

Tousled, unshaven, Jean-Luc Godard shifts staccato about some clinic cell, banging bits of the furniture and himself with a fist, no Garbo from *Queen Christina* 'remembering the room' but a fraught film director closer to dismembering it. This early sequence from **First Name Carmen** establishes a tone of frustrated, aimless turbulence which the film is never quite to shake off. Amid a scramble of letters punched out on a typewriter during Godard's jerky and impotent aggressiveness the words *mal vu, mal dit* appear: 'badly seen (or visualised)', 'badly put (or said)'. Uncle Jean – as the Godard-character is called – is suffering from nothing more clinically serious than creator's block but when a comical-looking doctor tries to persuade him to leave he insinuates he would rather hang on at the asylum, against the day when genuine lunacy strikes. What happens, instead (if that is the *mot juste*), is a visit from his niece Carmen X (Maruschka Detmers), who effectively releases both Uncle Jean and Jean-Luc from their dilemmas by asking if she may borrow uncle's seaside villa at Trouville to make a movie, dangling the bait that he might be prepared to direct it.

It transpires her request is a ruse: the girl is front-woman for a bunch of amateurish robber-terrorists and the fashionable machinery of video will be an excuse to facilitate a bank robbery and a later kidnapping, much as the cultural parallels – albeit minimal – to Merimée and Bizet will afford Godard a daylight snatch on the attention of the gullible, a tongue-in-cheek way-in and rude framework. Don José becomes an ineffectual young gendarme, Joseph (Jacques Bonnaffe), falling on Carmen during the botched bank job and falling for her as their floored wrestling turns to passionate fumblings. He helps her to escape; they share some baffled and bare-arsed amorous moments at that Trouville villa ('Why do women exist?' he asks gloomily during a bed-passage when men of coarser grain would find the well-furnished answer only too obvious, going on to equate her 'hole' or *trou* with prison); Carmen, understandably cooling, suggests that his academic inadequacies – her boss 'only hires college kids' – will disqualify him from gang membership, subsequently flirts with a hotel bellboy and generally sets things up for a bloody finale. So much for the purloined plot of fickleness and erotic obsession.

But, of course, this is only part of the picture, as diehard Godardians will have anticipated. As with the director's last film, *Passion*, there is the inner, or outer, business of a director involved – as a running element *of* the film – in the hazards of film-making itself. By now my jaw quite cracks with boredom at this unprofessional ploy, but a formidable panel – composed entirely of film-makers – reacted more sympathetically at Venice last year, awarding *First Name Carmen* the Golden Lion. And, in fairness, having run a gamut from the astonishing B-movie 'homage' of *Breathless* through increasing politicisation to a mind-numbing series of renunciations of capitalist cinema, Godard here comes as close as is possible for a man damn near devoid of humour to sending himself up. It would be fascinating to know what role his collaborator over the last ten years, Anne-Marie Miéville played in all this; she is, after all, credited with the screenplay. But there is Uncle Jean, wandering into a bistro and making a sort of joke about Mao being a great cook: 'He fed all China'; and guilelessly lending himself as directorial camouflage – 'I hope your documentary is fiction' – to the muddled kidnap scene in an hotel restaurant.



Jean-Luc as Uncle Jean

Where – another disconcerting, but (or therefore) Godardian element in the mix – the Quatuor Prat is playing a Beethoven string quartet. This amiable group, sometimes joined by a fumbling violinist Claire (Myriem Roussel) whose function in the piece is confusing, is heard off or seen on with their Beethoven bits throughout, as often as not rehearsing. This deployment of good music has occasional relevance to the emotional temper of given sequences but is, anyway, ever so classy: any fool could have used Bizet, who has to be content with a little hum. There is a Tom Waits song; and there is also – or did I dream? – a tuneful cassette whisper, in that asylum room, of 'mon ami Pierrot'. Whatever: *Pierrot le Fou* is the other Godard film most likely to spring to mind watching this one, which makes as fragmented play with 'beautiful' Raoul Coutard visuals – nightscapes in the city, the sea again and again – as it does with sound. (Both sound and photography got further Venice awards.) It *is* all very handsome, but something wilful inside me hankers after meaning and this whole – deliberately disjointed – registered as much, much less than the sum of its parts. Not that it doesn't abound in invitations to play spot-the-reference games. My closing offer goes like this. Others have noted a Buñuelian echo in that near-coupling on the bank floor. But what about the bellboy's stammered reply to Carmen's reiterated last question: 'It's called dawn'? Buñuel's *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* actually drew its title from Giraudoux's *Electre*, from the very same passage in which Carmen's query about 'the innocents' and 'the guilty' may be found. Does this help at all? I can't use it: feel free.

Free is very apparently what that arm-chancing director Henry Jaglom feels in **Can She Bake a Cherry Pie?**, a homespun chain of non-sequiturs which turns out to make agreeably sentimental sense. Crumpled, garrulous Michael Emil from *Sitting Ducks*, as absurdly congenial as ever, gets his confidence dented when Karen Black, snifflingly abandoned by her husband, crosses his path, soon occupies his bed, then briefly and casually deserts him for a young café-cad with a magical trained pigeon. With Ms Black in tremendous shrewd-scatty form, the perils inherent in Jaglom's impromptu-sounding dialogue are mostly skirted in favour of comic freshness, small immediacies of hurt and fun. Central Park and New York in general play better than supporting roles in this unabashed escapade, one from a heart.

When the Mountains Tremble, with a benefit night launch this Thursday, is a docudrama about Guatemala's hard past and tormented present by Pamela Yates and Tom Sigel. Using a plump, sad-faced young Indian woman, Rigoberta Menchú, with an immediate family history of appalling suffering, as linking narrator, it sketches in key-incidents and, more startlingly, offers on-camera interviews with an utterly cynical land-owner, a foolish cleric, as well as the more predictable footage of a naive soldier, a freedom fighter's funeral, noble-eyed guerrillas. Somehow the makers contrived to infiltrate both camps, after a fashion. God knows, one's own cynicism is out of place here, but one could wish away such devices as a 'dramatised' dinner party, sneering interpreting voices. In the same question-raising programme, *Nicaragua: Report from the Front.* □

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TELEVISION
Hugo Williams

Must be joking

ENVIRONMENT minister Patrick Jenkin was 'reported to be furious' last week over the exposure of the Crown Agency as the oldest cathouse in Europe. He certainly looked flushed when he appeared on **News at One** (ITV), but why? Because it was true? Because it was told? Or because it made the government into a pimp? I thought his excuse that it was 'stale buns' very lame; it was news to me. And it wasn't enough to hear him admit that Britain was 'one of the least uncorrupt countries in the world'. Perhaps the Agency could recoup some of its massive spendings by selling the film rights to television: a 14-part blockbuster called 'A Thorn in my Crown'.

'Welcome to the Show! And WHAT a show!' said the announcer as we got out our knitting for **The Little and Large Show** (BBC-1). If your life is staying home with spousie and watching TV, this is the stuff you've been looking for. You'll think you're the centre of the universe: all the jokes are about marriage or television! First off, the boys try to ring Jim Rockford. He isn't in. Next, it's *Dallasty*. Some erudition here. Something about paying a woman for sex. For *The Dukes of Hazard* a car flies through the air and buries itself in something: 'Oh those Duke boys!' Mustn't forget *This is Your life:* 'Can you tell me where Ronnie Barker's dressing room is?' asks Large. He runs through his impressions: 'I'm Little Caesar' (why not Large?) then, changing to Brando: 'I'm gonna make you an offer you can't refuse.' For Bogart he twitches his face some. Finally, he does his Tommy Cooper: 'Just like that! Just like that!!!'

How did guest Georgie Fame feel about all this? They made him do his *Ballad of Bonnie & Clyde*, helping him with the singing and acting out the legend in drag: 'Bonnie and Clyde/They lived a lot together/ And finally together/They died.' When Georgie's piano exploded in the shoot-out I thought he was going to cry. Sweat coursed through his face-pack. He couldn't look up in case he caught the eye of someone he knew. A final reference: 'Little and Large are appearing in Dick Whittington in Nottingham.'

To the practised eye, **Cannon and Ball** (ITV) are a fraction further up market than Little and Large, although both sets are so far down market they have to pump air down to them to keep them alive. Their first joke is a story with sound effects that come in the wrong places although it's also funny when it goes wrong. Like the other team, they have a musical spot: 'In A flat?' 'No, I'm going to do it here.' In the case of both teams it is the round, curly one (Large; Ball) who is funny, because North Country. Thus: 'You killed it and it were pregnant', 'He were the feathered type', 'She were a fan dancer'. You see how the dialect 'were' indicates the area to be searched for humour? More of this jollity later.

At break-time I flipped over for a gasp at 20/20 Vision's **Let's Face It** (C4), a report on the thousands of people who suffer permanent facial damage from traffic accidents, cancer or burns. Christine Piff lost half her face to cancer. She now puts on her eye, cheek and palate with her glasses. Researcher Lyn Gambles made herself up as an accident victim and filmed people's reaction: not a pretty sight. We give people a 9-inch wider birth if they are disfigured, 18 inches if it looks congenital. We treat them like mental defectives because anyone who has suffered that much must be screwed up by it.

Anyone lingering over breakfast next day who picked up on Jimmy Savile's incredibly realistic road accident on **Mind How You Go** (BBC-1) – blood, glass and skin all over the place, nobody moving – will at least know what to do first on such an occasion, if they can keep their eyes open and their breakfast down: back up, send for help, don't move anyone, talk to them, remove their false teeth.

Meanwhile, back at Cannon & Ball, a variation on *Call My Bluff* is in process: 'Do you have gloxinias?' 'No, it's my Wellingtons that make me walk like this.' 'All right clever, how do you propagate?' 'Well, you take a piece of wood and you prop it against the gate . . . ' Wading through this material in a doomed rescue attempt came the Four Tops, singing 'Reach out and I'll be there...'

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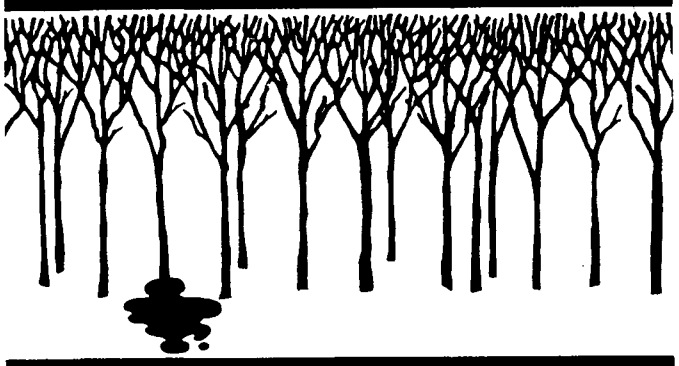

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Now, are these comedians on TV because they're unfunny, or are they unfunny because they're on TV? Everyone likes jokes about where they work, but TV producers seem to like nothing else. Why? Last week I saw comic performance-artist Ian Hinchliffe in 'Down and Out in Brixton and London' at the Brixton Art Gallery. Hinchliffe clambered through the smouldering remains of his stage-set like a deranged Popeye in pursuit of a flying fish to cook on it, arguing with 'Leviticus' and referring to Orwell as 'George Harlowe'. We all know people like Hinchliffe, amazing people who aren't on television because they're so funny because they aren't on television.

In **The Road to 1984** (C4) James Fox was the best looking Orwell of recent times, but the play moved so rapidly, from Orwell's wedding to a hostel, to a hospital, to Southwold beach, to Burma, to Catalonia, to Eton and back again, that if one didn't know where the hell one was already one didn't know where the hell one was. A hint of death, blood or fear and we were whisked to Burma to go through that hanging again. For light relief there was Fox's ingenious accent: 'Enimal Firm' he said. 'Kedberry's chocolit inyone?' We visited everywhere one more time before settling to the film's thesis, rather tired now, that Winston Smith is really Orwell, a view which Anthony Burgess (author of *1985*) thought important enough to *ram* home in **Orwell – A Personal View** (C4). His turn next year I suppose. □

MUSIC
Andrew Clements

Scoring

Wozzeck
Covent Garden
Tippett: The Blue Guitar
Wigmore Hall

The Royal Opera's production of **Wozzeck** was first seen in 1952, given in English with sets by Caspar Neher. The current revival uses the original German for the first time, retains Neher's scenery and grafts on to it a new staging by Willy Decker. There is nothing remarkable about any visual aspect of the show, but musically it is absolutely compelling. If Berg's score has ever been heard to greater advantage in this country I would be amazed.

There was a strong case for throwing away all of Neher's designs – ugly, insipid, proving nothing but a hindrance to the affecting directness of the action – and presenting a low-resource *Wozzeck* at Covent Garden along the lines of Moshinsky's *Peter Grimes*. Decker was undoubtedly hamstrung by the unremitting awfulness of the stage pictures when he was called in to inject some life into a tired production, but the glosses he has added are now a major irritant: the Doctor is given a whole team of obscene assistants/students who reduce the scene of Wozzeck's humiliation to simple-minded farce; stage violence alternates between convincing literalness (for Marie's murder) and sanitised shadow-boxing (the fight between Wozzeck and the Drum Major); the dancing in the tavern is rendered as grotesque caricature; the drowning is unconvincingly handled.

That the evening is still to be thoroughly recommended is because of the quality of the central casting, and due also to the decision to play the opera in a single span, without indulgent intervals between the three acts, so bringing the effect closer to that of Büchner's loosely connected scene sequence from which Berg derived his taut scenario. The whole thing is over in 95 minutes and the stronger for that. Presumably the credit for the decision goes to the conductor Christoph von Dohnanyi, and if previously one had not realised his total understanding of the Bergian idiom from his recordings (on Decca) of both operas, there can be no doubts at all after hearing him here. The Covent Garden orchestra plays marvellously for him, enabling every texture to be perfectly balanced (with a lightweight, but not underpowered bass line) and every solo to be etched to maximum effect. The beauty of the interludes was sufficient to silence even the Covent Garden audience and I lost count of the felicitous ways in which Dohnanyi underpinned the drama – a serene, desperately sad singing line at the end of the second scene, achieved with a handful of strings, the 'invention on one note' in the third act pungently driven, the final interlude dissolving into the heartbreaking triviality of the last scene.

On such a comprehensive musical base, José Van Dam and Anja Silja can build performances of enormous conviction. Van Dam's Wozzeck is solid, almost too beautifully toned and quite without overstated histrionics; nobody in my experience has made *Sprechgesang* sound so natural and unforced, or preserved vocal quality in it so completely. Silja's Marie has been the definitive portrayal for well over a decade and if the years have ravaged the top of the voice, it is artfully disguised and more, much more than compensated for by the sheer involvement of her acting; Berg wrote for Marie and Lulu his most committed, personal operatic music and Miss Silja understands that better than anyone. Among the supporting players Kim Begley's Andres and Phyllis Cannan's Marget are well up to standard, but Hermann Winkler sounded underpowered as the Captain and the Drum Major of Werner Götz did not cut the physical or vocal dash one expected, though the production does not help him. But a special word for Laurence Walker as Marie's son. The last scene, easily toppled into sentimentality, is finely balanced; Master Walker makes it truly heartbreaking, and he does so quite on his own.

ON SUNDAY at the Wigmore Hall Julian Bream brought to London for the first time Michael Tippett's **The Blue Guitar,** commissioned by Bream and premiered by him in Pasadena last November. It's a 12-minute 'sonata for solo guitar' that takes Wallace Stevens's famous Picasso-inspired poem as its starting point. Tippett has not attempted a strictly programmatic piece, but retains only some gestural ideas from the poem to provide the titles of his three movements – 'Transforming', 'Dreaming', 'Juggling'. Otherwise the text has been entirely absorbed.

Perhaps for this reason I found the result disappointingly thin. Tippett at his best is a lapidary, allusive artist, and one might have expected his response to a poem so full of haunting resonances to be equally richly patterned. But the dry courtesies of the sonata deny all this. Only the opening movement – crisply opposed blocks of material and transient apparent references to Tippett's piano concerto – is fully characteristic of its composer; it is the only section of the sonata that comes close to creating a convincing, identifiable texture. Otherwise there is nothing to match the earlier guitar writing in Tippett's *Songs for Achilles*, the spin-off from the opera *King Priam*. Yet maybe the disappointment lies in me: I expected a major work and Tippett has provided Bream instead with an unpretentious recital piece that is idiomatically written, tightly constructed and which will travel well. □

THEATRE
Rosalind Carne

Punishment

Softcops
CARYL CHURCHILL *The Pit*
Masterclass
DAVID POWNALL *Old Vic*

The nature of power and the subtleties of coercion lie at the root of both plays, and, though vastly different in attitude and approach, each manages to leave the spectator with a similar sense of powerlessness. This is not so much a glum response to their respective subjects – the niceties of institutionalised punishment and the fate of the artist under Stalin – as to their dramatic style, which bombards us with ideas and effects but leaves the emotions unscathed.

Feelings *are* touched in **Masterclass,** but only lightly, and more through the intriguing characterisation of Stalin and Timothy West's dangerously endearing performance than through any deep engagement with the moral and political issues at stake. Laughter comes easily, a little too easily under the circumstances.

This is certainly not the case with Caryl Churchill's play. So intent is she on stating her message that every whiff of humour is imbued with a grim sense of its sinister implications. Apart from the superb musical accompaniment from the Medici String Quartet, the result is one of the least enjoya-

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ble evenings I can remember in three years' regular theatregoing. Enjoyment may not be mandatory, but there are few compensatory factors in **Softcops**; it keeps you guessing, and hoping, but consistently fails to provide what it promises. Despite the play's imaginative direction by Howard Davies, when I left the theatre I felt as if I'd been mentally battered with a blunt instrument.

The normally boxy auditorium is extended into an L-shape, giving tantalising glimpses of a baroque interior behind a scattering of wooden furniture, swathed in dust sheets. A gang of men in evening dress gather to witness the public mutilation of a young thief. Gradually the principals emerge. Pierce (Ian Talbot) is the master of ceremonies who becomes increasingly preoccupied in his private observation of the efficacy of various deterrents. He meets Vidocq (Geoffrey Freshwater), a notorious 19th-century French detective and master of disguise, and Lacenaire (Malcolm Storry), his glamorous criminal counterpart. In a succession of loosely connected episodes, which acts like an ironic moral pageant, the treatment of crime is seen as a form of mass entertainment, part of a government plan to mystify and depoliticise the criminal process. The cast of 12 men take turns at representing the many faces of Vidocq in short sketches, supplemented with cabaret-style exhibitions of torture, execution, incarceration and so forth.

Ms Churchill pays tribute to Michel Foucault's *Surveiller et Punir* for some of the ideas in the play, but she appears to be too enamoured of her source material to see the pitfalls of its dramatic reconstruction. The content is too tortuous and intellectual to work as agit-prop which, in any case, needs much stronger links between auditorium and stage, while a drama of ideologies needs fuller personalities, especially in the theatre of words.

DAVID POWNALL goes to the other extreme by creating credible characters in a mood which feels too lightweight for the material in question. It is 1948, the year in which Marshal Zhdanov, Stalin's spokesman on cultural matters, was orchestrating a purge of all 'formalist and anti-Soviet practices' in music. The imaginary scenario takes place in the Kremlin on the eve of a crucial meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Prokofiev and Shostakovich have been summoned to present the case of the Musicians' Union and to receive Stalin's judgment on their fate.

The four men make a night of it and the stage is constantly alive with the clash of egos. Jonathan Allen's Zhdanov is the gruff, no-nonsense administrator who wants to make a clean sweep of all dissident elements. He doesn't disguise his loathing for the two composers (Peter Kelly and David Bamber) who hide their self-importance under a veneer of pragmatic humility. It is a powerful performance, but it is Timothy West who dominates, taunting the stolid Marshal, hinting at a seething discontent and vulnerability behind his piggy eyes and apoplectic flush. He is a perfect example of the psychoanalytic dictum that an unhappy person is a dangerous person. Stalin has a terrifying charm. He can offer drinks, listen to the musicians play and appear to take their part against Zhdanov, only to revert without warning to statements like 'Either you come down off your pedestals or I will have you shot'. Pownall's dialogue is fast and often amusing, with a keen ear for the nuances of Communist Party jargon.

Justin Greene is the director and his style is sparkling, racy and rich in lively detail. In one startling episode Stalin produces a collection of Prokofiev's recorded works, asking the composer to choose a suitable piece. This done, Stalin looks at the record, appears as if about to play it, only to smash it on the edge of the gramophone. He then proceeds to do the same with the entire collection, as Mr Kelly twitches in agony.

The idea has been mooted that the play is a serious contribution to the question of the role of the artist under socialism, but I fail to see it as anything other than a humorous tribute to bourgeois individualism. What does linger in the mind is its portrait of a dictator and of the roots of a tyrannical personality in humble provincial origins and a deep sense of social and cultural inadequacy. □

TASTE
Jules Lubbock

Kitsch defended

PETER Dormer's ingenious analysis of kitsch (NS 13 January) has a distinguished pedigree, back to Clement Greenberg's 1939 *Partisan Review* article 'Kitsch and the Avant-Garde', which he acknowledges, and to Dwight Macdonald's 1960 *Partisan Review* article 'Masscult and Midcult'. They drew upon Wordsworth's attack on 'frantic novels' in the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads; Wordsworth drew upon Rousseau's attack on the rococo art of Louis XV; and Rousseau echoed Machiavelli's polemic against the pageant-laden tyranny of Medicean Florence. All depend upon Plato's dissection of the rhetorician's tricks and upon Xenophon's Socrates who contrasted the uselessness of a golden suit of armour with the practicality of a bricklayer's hod. The ceremonies, works of art and artefacts of a repressive society are meretricious because they use subtle deceits to gratify the senses and thereby to captivate the masses.

There are two problems with Peter Dormer's application of these arguments to furniture. First, he ignores the Marxist thrust behind Greenberg's 1939 analysis of the kitsch cultural policies of the Fascist and Stalinist dictatorships. Greenberg, and Macdonald subsequently, argued that the taste for kitsch was not inherent in the individual, but was the product of state capitalism which used it to exploit and manipulate the masses. These regimes had espoused the taste of the masses for illusion to promote 'the illusion that the masses rule', their chains were disguised with garlands of kitsch.

Thus both writers tried to escape the charge of élitism. Only in the wake of an international socialist revolution would the élitism of avant-garde art and the fake populism of Masscult be reconciled in a communal culture such as that enjoyed by the citizens of Periclean Athens or Medicean Florence. One may accuse both partisans of naivety concerning the earlier cultures they admired, but there is no doubting that their argument had a historical and political dimension which Peter Dormer's lacks.

The second problem is more serious. Greenberg and Macdonald, like all their eminent precursors, were discussing the *public* arts in the service of the state. They referred specifically to overt and covert censorship in Hollywood and the mass media in Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany, designed to conceal the facts of political life from the population. Peter Dormer is talking about humble articles of domestic furniture – tassled lampshades, nests of Georgian tables and loo-seats. These are kitsch and hence reactionary because they make no intellectual demands upon their owners, because they are shoddily manufactured, because they are theatrical and because their cultural references are hazy.

I confess to some difficulty in imagining the appearance of an intellectually demanding and undisguised lampshade. Would it be a bare bulb? Is one to believe that a French 'squatter' is more intellectually demanding, grittier and less deceitful than a comfy British loo? Or must honest people crap in their backyards? Shoddy manufacture is always lamentable, but is Peter Dormer aware how much a cabinet-made reproduction of a Georgian table costs? Would he deny people the innocent pleasures of taste on account of their relative poverty?

Then again, all decorative design makes cultural references and these, more often than not, are hazily understood. All interior decoration is a stage-set, in a sense. But it is also something more. It is the poetry of everyday life. A favourite butt for the critics of kitsch is the 'glowing embers' electric fire, which many people leave on throughout the year. Are all such people self-deceiving reactionaries? Of course not. Such fires are a convenient way to maintain the ancient tradition of keeping the fire alight in the sacred hearth.

Many of these fires are shoddy, and their cultural references like those of so many private domestic rituals are hazy, but to censor the equipment required for such practices is an assault upon hallowed meanings and upon the imagination itself. One might as well criticise the glitter on the Christmas Tree because it isn't real snow.

Peter Dormer is entitled to his own domestic morality, but only the most fearsome tyranny could force every household to adopt it. On the other hand, Masscult in the public arts and the mass media remains an issue of major concern. □

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WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 2806 **Set by May Day**

Compers are asked to update well-known nursery rhymes to provide a message – religious, political or 'of a personal nature' – by 10 February.

No 2803 **Set by P. Kay**

Topically gloomy rewrites of Noel Coward or Cole Porter lyrics.

Report **By Mercy Dash**

I think you all did jolly well, especially given such hard acts to follow. Runners up are too numerous to name. It was difficult, for instance, to choose between all the malevolent versions of 'You're the pits/end/dregs', so we just picked one of the very nastiest (and we don't expect any whingeing – those of a sensitive disposition need not read it). A Nightingale each and over to you.

They're chiefly choked in Chesterfield
In Bermondsey they're blue
They're malcontent
In the Borough of Kent
And harried in Hackney too
I hardly know about Huddersfield
But the Gorbals is terribly glum
There are women in benders
And town-hall high spenders
And fewer home helps for one's Mum
They're in frightful fettle in Finchley now
And cock-a-hoop down at the Bank
The champagne corks in the Shires show how
It's Maggie they all must thank
It's wretched and rotten in Britain today
But haven't we always preferred it that way?
NICHOLAS MURRAY

I voted for a marvellous party
I must say debate was intense
We all had to do what the people we knew would
regret most twenty years hence.
Dear Michael arrived with new armour
Some shells and a Trident or four,
And Margaret closed a hospital ward,
Bankrupted the unions, made Neil a lord,
Put on her helmet and waved a big sword.
I couldn't have liked it more! ANNE WATSON

Beside the Clyde, lots of Scots do it,
And British Leyland Trots do it,
Let's do it, let's lose our jobs . . .

In Wales, men mining coals do it,
Some civil service moles do it,
Let's do it, let's lose our jobs . . .

Folk from Perth to Penzance do it,
There are millions who,
Fired with excitement, do it –
And sign up on that queue . . .

Businessmen bouncing cheques do it,
There are famous Foreign Secs. do it,
Let's do it, let's lose our jobs . . .

The bored at Ford plants in hordes do it,
Even nurses on the wards do it,
Let's do it, let's lose our jobs. WILL BELLENGER

You're the pits, you're the Yorkshire ripper;
You're the tits of an ageing stripper.
You're the sort of job any decent yob avoids;
You're a BUPA doctor, you're Harvey Proctor,
you're haemhorroids.
You're the teeth of a silver-fox trap;
You're the AIDS in a guardsman's jockstrap;
You're the slightly sinister deal the Minister fixes
up at the Ritz –
So if baby I'm the summit you're the pits!

You're a suit made of grotty lurex;
You're Beirut; you're a punctured Durex;
You're the House of Lords with its bunch of
frauds and shams;
You're atomic fall-out, you're England all out,
you're traffic jams.
You're the cane; you're a Frontbench Scandal;
You're the brain of a soccer vandal;
You're the twelve-wheeled tanker, a secret
wanker who's slowly losing his wits –
And if baby I'm the summit you're the pits!
JIMMIE PEARSE

Ev'ry time I picture Nye
I die a little.
This insurance we must buy
I wonder why a little.
If you're sick and wealthy
You're safe in their hands,
But the poor unhealthy
Get Thatcher's reprimands.
When you're ill you take a dose
Of BUPA for it.
Tories fail to diagnose
Why we don't all adore it.
'There's no health scheme finer.'
– But how large
The charge
For Major *and* miner?
Ev'ry time I picture Nye. KEVIN SMITH

What happened to young St John-Stevas?
He hasn't been seen for a year.
When a chap gets too arty inside the wrong party
It's bound to affect his career.
Does anyone see that ingenuous MP –
Was it Prior, or Peyton, or Pym? –
He went off to Barnsley, or some Northern hole,
And, addressing a few thousands chaps on the dole,
Suggested there might be a *government* role:
I wonder what happened to him. NOEL PETTY

FIRST PERSON

Anne Smith
Peas and qs

LIVING AS I DO in the Reykjavík of Great Britain, I don't get out into polite society as much as I probably should – which is just as well, for I can't stand polite society. I can't *under*stand it, either. This became evident when the first of my sisters got engaged and the prospective in-laws were invited to high tea. Not only were the siblings forced to starve from breakfast till 4 pm, we were also thrust outdoors in our debilitated condition to do ridiculous things like mow the lawn in a freezing wind and scrape the birdshit off the gateposts.

The rest of my sisters had the sense to marry men whose parents had only recently learned the use of the fork and whose sole touching concession to the formality of engagement parties was to put their false teeth in for the first hour or so, till the social ice was broken. I, unfortunately, though avoiding engagement parties, could not avoid genteel professorial sherry parties at university. To this day I have nightmares about being tied to a pillar in the quad, a glass of sherry in one hand and a cheese twiglet in t'other, while hordes of highly painted academic wives perform their gruesome status-rituals round me.

I have yet to meet the Scot who is not nervous of social occasions. Some think to play safe by imitating English style as laid down by Anthony Trollope – the ladies withdraw after the meal, leaving the gentlemen behind to get pissed, tell dirty jokes and collect subs for the Conservative Party. Others take the precaution of getting newted-up in advance and immediately embark on an exchange of increasingly blatant insults with their equally sozzled guests, till the evening ends in fisticuffs and vomiting down the stairwell. This, with variations, is the Scottish way. Neither is the medium a happy one, but rather involves frigid occasions with bonhomous pseudo-lairds in kilts coyly inviting you to 'tak' a wee dram' and playing incomprehensible records of bothy ballads all evening.

I was grateful, therefore, to the Literary Editor for sending me, in the course of last year, three books the better to prepare me for my forays into the advanced civilisation of the south. Never mind that two are American – a colony is a colony and the problems of social ease with the master-race are the same. Judith Martin's *Miss Manners' Guide to Excruciatingly Correct Behaviour* (Hamish Hamilton, £9.95) could, anyway, have been written only by an American: the English believe that manners are an inherited trait, like castles and posts in the civil service.

Whether or not my manners are improved, I shall laugh for years to come at the wit and wisdom of Miss Manners as she answers her correspondents in the American press who seek her guidance on every social problem known to the *nouvelle bourgeoisie*. Her observations upon the herd instinct in peas, for instance, should give aspiring sociologists food for thought. Her reply to 'As a businessman, how do I allow a businesswoman to pay for my lunch?' is a model of exactitude: 'With credit card or cash, as she prefers'. I urge you not to miss this classic.

The Scots as a race have perhaps not advanced enough to appreciate the polite use of euphemism – I fear it may be a few hundred years yet before we even get round to calling a spade a spade, as distinct from a neffin shovel – so Hugh Rawson's *Dictionary of Euphemisms* had not the same impact. I was grateful to learn, nonetheless, that 'matinee' means sex in the afternoon (the French Academy will be livid).

Andrew Barrow's *International Gossip 1970-1980* (Hamish Hamilton, £12) was reassuring, though. It appears that society like *Finnegan's Wake* and the Aristotelian theory of the dramatic arts, is circular. The upper classes also vomit down stairwells, generally provide the material from which dirty jokes are made. No matter how they eat their peas, and give or take an ounce two of birdshit on the gateposts, Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady, etc, et

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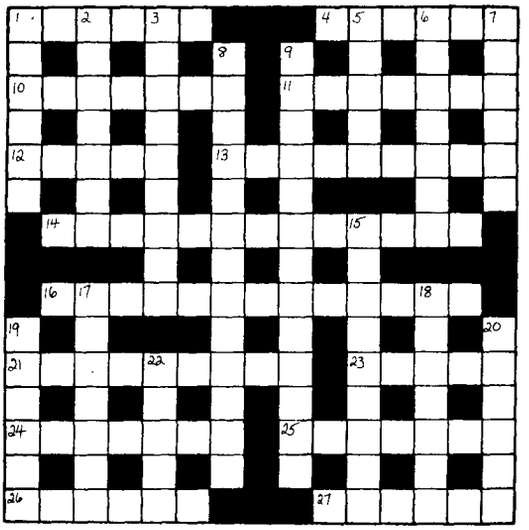
Weekend Crossword 1428

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1428, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 7 February.



Name_____

Address_____

ACROSS

1. One of those rooms which have been in long use (6)
4. Makes short work of rogues (6)
10. A town is here thanks to the mixture of races (7)
11. Commanded as an alternative the elimination of communism? (7)
12. Brush and what to do with it (5)
13. Strange miracle about the good coming from experience (9)
14. Fully take in the unusual detail – it is like a bird behind (13)
16. The troops make one follow prowess in batting (13)
21. His joy is a plant (9)
23. Robin is in commercial radio (5)
24. Where to stumble on crude oil (7)
25. The tail in one transformed into the beginning (7)
26. Seal sounding like young bird (6)
27. Something vegetable which may be used to make a cigar (6)

DOWN

1. If the insect lost its tail it would still keep its place (6)
2. Release the posh crowd from the paper (7)
3. Patriot with a licentious heart (9)
5. Drink in acid erroneously (5)
6. The distance in which a vehicle reverses is an astonishing thing (7)
7. Seat which is divine in town (6)
8. Expert on sex reveals potential ache kills love (8,5)
9. Ship to convert and a learner to instruct in means of transporting wounded (8,5)
15. Copying one before getting married without it (9)
17. Give directions and make a call when closing (7)
18. Worker who would turn idler if he lost his leader (7)
19. Specifies conditions (6)
20. 'The ––– architecture of the snow' (Emerson) (6)
22. Call up all right in time (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1426

Prizewinners to 1426

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M. Jones (London WC1)
Jean M. Miller (Leicester)

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Applications are invited for the post of University Lecturer or University Assistant Lecturer, the level of appointment depending on age and experience.

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Further information and application forms may be obtained from the **Secretary of the Faculty Board of Engineering, Department of Engineering, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1PZ**, to whom completed applications should be sent to reach him by **29 February 1984**. *All correspondence should refer to the post in industrial sociology.*

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GLC

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society
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LISTINGS

FRI 27 JANUARY

LONDON Homelessness and the Voluntary Sector – an ARVAC Conference 10am-5pm Mary Ward Centre, 42 Queen Sq, WC1. (Closing date for applications 13 Jan). Fee £5/£6 non membs incls coffee/lunch/tea. **Details: Pat Marsden, ARVAC, 26 Queen's Rd, Wivenhoe, Essex CO7 9JH. 0206 225344.**

LEICESTER 'Interdisciplinary Work: Problems and Progress' Foundation Conf of Interdisciplinary Assoc of Mental Health Workers at University of Leicester. Spkrs incl Prof Anthony Clare, Prof Kathleen Jones. Residential fee £40 (incls membership). **Details: Mrs F. Sykes, DES, University of Surrey, Guildford. 0483 571281.**

LONDON 'Threats to the Green Belt' and other issues. Spkr Alan Mattingly. 6.15pm Star and Garter Pub, 62 Poland St, W1. **Details: Socialist Countryside Grp. (London branch). 01-439 3749/01-230 3987 (day).**

SOLIHULL 'Selective Education'. Sprk Giles Radice MP. 7.30pm Central Library. **Org. Labour Party.**

NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME 'Groups within the PLP. Spkr Mark Fisher MP. 8pm Walterloo Blds. CLP HQ. **Org. Labour Party.**

BIRMINGHAM 'Which way for CLPD?' Discn. led by Trevor Fisher and Greg Campbell. 7.30pm Birmingham Labour Club, 14 Bristol St.

LONDON Nathan Shamuyarira will address joint meeting of Britain-Zimbabwe Soc. 6.30pm Royal Commonwealth Society.

SAT 28 JANUARY

DUDLEY Progressive Bookfair and William Morris Celebration Spkr A. L. Motion. Many stalls. 10 am-9 pm. King Street.

LONDON Day School on Ireland 'Republicanism and Socialism', 'Republicanism and Feminism'. Spkrs Desmond Greaves, Sue Colfer, Geoff Bell, Sarah Rolofs. 10.30 am-5 pm County Hall. Creche – apply in advance. **Details and tickets £1 Labour Comm. on Ireland, Box 42, 136 Kingsland High Road, E8.**

OXFORD CND Conf. on Non Nuclear Defence and Alternative Foreign Policy. Defence experts, British and European peace campaigners get together to discuss defence without the bomb. Ruskin College, Walton St. **Details: 0865 247429.**

SUN 29 JANUARY

LONDON Racism & Sport, Nat. discn. Conf. sponsored by Communist Party, Afro-Caribbean Org., Indian Workers Assoc, Creche. 11.30am-4.30pm County Hall, SE1. Adm. £1/50p unwaged. **Details: Communist Party Race Relations Comm. 16 St. John St, EC1.**

COVENTRY Bloody Sunday Demonstration – coach leaves Pool Meadow bus station 10am £5/£2 unwaged. **Details: Coventry Troops Out c/o 13 High St.**

MON 30 JANUARY

RICHMOND 'Work – Who wants it?' – the future for employment and leisure. Sprks Ivor Clemitson, Robin Dacey. 8pm 57 Church Road. **Details: Richmond Labour Party. 01-940 6307.**

LONDON The Next Prime Minister of New Zealand – David Lange, Leader of NZ Labour Party will address NZLP London Branch members and sympathisers. 6-8pm Committee Rm 16, House of Commons. Host: Austin Mitchell, MP. **Details: 01-221 4585 (eve), 01-257 3783 (day).**

TUE 31 JANUARY

WIMBLEDON Peace Themes – poetry & drama evening. Adm. free. 8pm Community Centre, St. Georges Rd, SW19. **Details: Wimbledon Disarmament Coalition, 66 Lambton Rd, SW20.**

WED 1 FEBRUARY

LONDON Conference of Socialist Economists monthly discn of current economic/political developments. Introduced by Ron Smith. 8pm Wheatsheaf, Rathbone Pl, W1. **Details: Conference of Socialist Economists, 25 Horsell Rd, N5. 01-607 9615.**

LONDON 'Darkness over Vienna – the uprising in 1934' – commemorative lecture by Prof. Dr. Gerhard Botz, Austrian scholar, on events surrounding 1934 civil war in Austria, plus documentary exhibition. 6pm Waterloo Rms, Festival Hall, SE1.

THURS 2 FEBRUARY

LONDON 'Education Policy-making in Conservative Party' – seminar and discn. led by Stuart Sexton, Special Adviser to Sec. of State for Education. 5.30-7pm Rm. 3B18 King's College, Strand, WC2. **Org. Politics, Education and Society Seminar Grp. 01-836 5454 x 2325.**

FRI 3 FEBRUARY

LONDON 'Is Kadar's Hungary an Alternative?' – seminar presented by Mihaly Vajda, leading Hungarian Socialist critic. 6pm Polytechnic of Central London, 309 Regent St, W1. Sponsors: PCL, School of Slavonic and E. European Studies and LSE. **Details: 01-482 0404.**

OXFORD Public Meeting to launch the History Workshop Centre for Social History. Spkrs Christopher Hill, Raphael Samuel, Carolyn Steedman, Olwen Hufton, Tim Mason. 7.30-9.30pm Buxton Hall, Ruskin College. **Details: 0865 56041/53824/240294.**

SAT 4 FEBRUARY

LONDON 'Chinese women since Mao' – seminar/discn. Spkrs Elisabeth Croll and Sheila Hillier on 'Chinese Women and Health' (Illustrated), Penny Cane 'The One Child Family'. Adm free. 2pm St Pancras Church Hall, Lancing St, NW1. **Org. Zed Books/SACU. Details: 01-837 4014/0384.**

LONDON A reading of Kafka's 'The Trial' in aid of International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, introduced by Czech writer: Zdena Tomin. 4pm Riverside Theatre Studio. Tickets: £2.

OXFORD 'Who cares?' Campaign Oxford Region NHS Joint TU Comm and History Workshop Centre for Social History Joint Conference. Oxford Town Hall, St Aldate's and Ruskin College. 'NHS: past, present and future'. Spkrs incl. National Union leaders, leading historians and Michael Meacher for Labour Party. Tickets: £4/£2 unwaged, NHS TU workers free. Send s.a.e. to NHS Conf. **History Workshop Centre for Social History, Ruskin College, Oxford.**

FORTHCOMING

7 FEB WANDSWORTH 'The Therapeutic Community – within and beyond the hospital boundary' – workshop led by representatives of The Henderson Hospital. 7.30pm Penfold Centre (off Buckhold Rd), 1 Neville Gill Clo, SW18. All welcome, adm. free, tea/coffee, collection. **Details: WAMH, 3 Brodrick Rd, SW17.**

7 FEB LONDON 'Tiger Bay is my home' history of black struggle in Cardiff. First of series of documentary films by Colin Prescod on black struggles against racism in UK. 7pm Inst. Race Relations, 247 Pentonville Rd, N1. **Details: 01-837 0041.**

7 FEB LONDON Seminar on the Practical Implications of Equal Treatment Regulations. 9.30-1pm Friends House, Euston Rd, NW1. Course fee £10. **Details: Alan Booth, CPAG, 1 Macklin St, WC2. 01-242 3225.**

7 FEB LONDON 'Labour's Lost Millions' Public Discn. with Eric Hobsbawm, Robin Cook, Harriet Harman, Beatrix Campbell. 7.30 pm Friends' House, Euston Rd, NW1. **Tickets £1/50p unwaged s.a.e. to Marxism Today, 16 St. John St, EC1 or LCC, 9 Poland St, W1.**

8 FEB LONDON 'Women and Mental Health' – second open planning meeting. 7pm 'A Womens Place', Victoria Embankment, SW1. Women only, access for disabled but ring **AWP for details on 01-836 6081.**

8 FEB LONDON 'Zimbabwe's Economic Performance in 1983 and prospects for '84'. Spkr. Roger Riddell, former Chief Economist, Confed. of Zimbabwe Industries. 1.15pm Africa Centre, 38 King St, WC2. **Org. Britain-Zimbabwe Soc.**

10 FEB LONDON Gay Humanist Group Open Meeting. Spkr Maureen Duffy on E. M. Forster. 7.30pm The Library, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1. **GHG, 34 Spring La, Kenilworth, CV8 2HB. 0026 58450.**

10 FEB LONDON Fundraising Party for Campaign for Press & Broadcasting Freedom. Disco, bar to 1am, buffet. £5. 8.30pm Ludgate Cellars, Apothecary St, EC4. **Write for tickets: CPBF, 9 Poland St, W1.**

11 FEB MANCHESTER Anti-Trident Convention Free Trade Hall. Fee £3/£1 visitors. **Details and leaflets Anti-Trident Campaign, 420 Sauchiehall St, Glasgow. 041-332 3141.**

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THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for free pamphlets, book list, programme of activities. Sunday, 29 January, 8 p.m. Informal Q/A Meeting 'Man, Mortal & Immortal'. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

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ACADEMIC, LITERARY type with country cottage, 40, tall, slim, divorced, seeks attractive cultured lady for friendship plus. Children welcome. Box 7420.

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LONDON-BASED, professional gentleman, 50, tall, divorced, fond of bridge, theatre, dancing, seeks younger, attractive, sensuous, independent, non-political lady, without ties or problems. Box 7453.

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MAN seeks somnolent, Bohemian woman, 40-50, with artistic or intellectual background for occasional fireside chats. Long-term reciprocated affection sought (not marriage). N. London, Herts, Bucks. Box 7438.

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SLIM, SMART, young, beautiful lady, 18-30, from London or Paris, is sought by a young accountant, 33, working in Saudi Arabia. Box 7447.

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